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The Birth and Infancy OF Jesus Christ

ACCORDING TO THE
GOSPEL NARRATIVES

BY THE
REV. LOUIS MATTHEWS SWEET, M. A.,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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Jesus Christ
15624

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To

The Name

Which is above every Name

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PREFACE

THE GOSPEL narratives of the Infancy and Youth of Jesus have always been dear to the heart of the church. No portion of the New Testament has been more influential in arousing those feelings of tenderness for childhood and respect for womanhood which are distinctively Christian. No portion of the New Testament has done more to mitigate the savagery of human nature and to hasten the day of universal peace than the narratives in which is enshrined the Christmas message, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." No portion of Scripture has contributed more to the maintenance of a complete and adequate Christology in the faith of the Church.

These narratives have in the past ten or twelve years become the storm center of critical controversy. The acrimonious discussions in Germany concerning credal obligations have issued in a critical investigation of the Infancy stories. The general outcome, so far as Germany is concerned, has been distinctly unfavorable.

The preliminary sections of Matthew and Luke have been practically thrown out of court as worthless. The general attitude of the European mind may be seen in Harnack,[1] and Colain, who does not even discuss the virgin birth.[2]

It is safe to predict a reaction from this extreme attitude.

[1] *History of Dogma*, pp. 100-105, *and What Is Christianity?* p. 33.

[2] See Lobstein, p. 135.

Indeed, among English thinkers the reaction has already begun.[1]

The following volume is the result of an inquiry into the documents, conducted for the purpose of reaching satisfactory personal convictions on the subject of Christ's birth and youth. The study was begun with a bias rather unfavorable to the doctrine of the miraculous birth, though with the usual warm affection for the Christmas narrative. The issue of the investigation has been an assured belief in the authenticity and authority of the Infancy narratives, and is offered as a contribution to the establishment of the historic faith as a valuable part of the heritage of the Christian Church.

To many it may seem that undue importance has been given to the mere mode of the Saviour's birth, by allotting to it a discussion so extensive and minute. The author hopes that the pages which follow will serve to dispel this misconception, for a misconception it certainly is.

Not only is the question of importance and interest in itself, as are all questions, even of minute detail concerning the life of the unique Man, but it touches not remotely upon other questions of more vital import,—the testimony of the Gospel witnesses, the mode and character of the Incarnation, the formation of the records, the processes of early Christian history.

Indeed, if we mistake not, it will be seen that, while the question of the miraculous birth may be and often is considered apart from other problems in Christology, yet, logically, the entire mode of interpreting the Incarnation is involved.

By what process did Jesus become Christ? One's attitude toward this question will issue in a corresponding attitude toward the question of His conception.

[1] See Sanday: Hastings *B. D.*, p. 646 b.

In addition to this, one need not adopt the rôle of a prophet in order to point out the possibility that, at some future time, the mode of Christ's birth may have a doctrinal importance which it does not seem now to possess. Stranger things have happened than that the process of changing emphasis, which has carried us from the death and resurrection, to the life and the teaching of Christ, may some day give an altogether new significance to His birth.

In the faith that the witnesses have told the truth, and that the truth will prevail, this study of the narratives of the sacred Infancy is offered to students of the Life of Jesus.

Indebtedness to other writers has been indicated in the notes. Wherever I have found close resemblances in thought or expression I have indicated them, even in cases where my own conclusions have been reached independently. The peculiar circumstances of this controversy have compelled me to take a polemical attitude toward the writings of men who are unquestionably Christian in spirit. This free and willing acknowledgment will serve to call attention to the fact that I am concerned with the theological and historical questions at issue, and not with the Christian standing of individuals or groups.

I am indebted to Professor W. J. Beecher for an inspiring course of study in prophecy, and for suggestions; to Professor J. S. Riggs for many helpful discussions of the themes here dealt with; to the Editorial Committee of the Presbyterian Board of Publication for advice and encouragement; to Miss Caroline C. Crane for invaluable aid in the preparation of the manuscript; and to my wife for careful literary revision of the text.

THE MANSE, Canandaigua, N. Y.

April 2, 1906.

INTRODUCTION

In one of our theological journals[1] appeared recently a symposium upon the supernatural birth of Jesus. The conclusions of the several writers, briefly stated, were that "the idea of the virgin birth reflects the spirit of the post-apostolic age, involving a compromise, or amalgamation, between the primitive doctrine of Messiahship by descent from David, and the Hellenistic, of Messiahship by incarnation after preëxistence, represented in the Wisdom doctrine of Paul, and the Logos doctrine of the fourth evangelist;" that "however sacred the associations which cling for us to the tradition, in simple candor it must be confessed that it contains nothing essential to the most exalted Christology;" that "he who casts himself upon Jesus as his divine Redeemer will find the fact of the virgin birth of this Saviour not only consonant with his faith and an aid to it, but a postulate of it, without which he would be puzzled and distressed." Such is the variation of opinion within the church upon this subject. A serious, scholarly discussion of it is, therefore, sure to be timely.

Negative criticism has at all times found these stories of a miraculous birth incredible. The notable fact of our day is that they have lost their hold upon many thoughtful Christian minds, who are willing to accept the Christmas message of the Gospels without that setting of annunciations, dreams, visits of wise men and shepherds, with

[1] *Biblical World*, vol. x, pp. 1-30.

which we are all so familiar. The causes at work begetting this spirit of doubt are:—

(*a*) The hesitation regarding the miraculous in the Gospel narratives which is the outcome of the scientific temper and spirit of our day. (*b*) The uncertainty begotten by historical criticism regarding the origin of these special narratives; and (*c*) the apparently valueless character of the fact of the supernatural birth so far as the New Testament itself is concerned. It is perhaps the last reason which has weight with many who are not disposed to deny the miraculous, and who would certainly not take such a position in reference to the Resurrection.

The first cause is, however, more prevalent than we are accustomed to think. If the fact serves no real purpose in the teaching of the New Testament, may it not have some in the way of glorifying the Master by making His incoming into the world more like that of reputed heroes of the heathen world? Or, if such an explanation is impossible, may not the emphasis later upon the doctrine of original sin with its transmission of taint have led to this conception of a break, and the formulation of a story to set it forth?

Such questions will not down, and an earnest, intelligent concern for the Scriptures cannot be indifferent to them. They are simply not the objections of a shallow skepticism, but as well the expressions of serious, disquieting doubt. They are asked, often with no flippant tone, but with a real desire for light and help. It is at once manifest that no answer can be helpful which does not meet negative criticism on its own ground. Such objectors, as Keim, Lobstein, Soltau, or Cheyne, not one of them aiming to be merely destructive in their objections to this recorded fact of Scripture, can only be refuted by exposing their mistaken use of evidence or by showing the insufficiency of

their reasoning. The task is not an easy one for him who would defend these opening chapters. The author of this work has in no way minimized the strength of the scholarship which he seeks to combat. With penetrating criticism, logical marshaling of facts, and sympathetic insight he has striven to show the place, purpose, and historical truthfulness of these accounts in Matthew and Luke.

The real strength and value of the work will be found in its vigorous grasp of the whole significance of the New Testament accounts of the birth of Jesus. Every phase of the evidence for its reality is discussed with the minutest care. Especially is the character of the documents containing the story subjected to keen analysis and criticism. They are made to speak for themselves regarding the date of their origin, and the influences which were formative of them.

Some years since, the author, little realizing that his studies would ultimately bring him to a defense of these chapters, undertook a critical study of the life and times of Herod the Great. He caught the spirit of that trying period of Jewish history. The background of Matthew's account became very definite and vivid. This study has fitted him to discuss with peculiar insight the Jewish qualities of these narratives and to show whether or not we have here "a compromise between a primitive doctrine of Messiahship by descent from David, and a Hellenistic, of Messiahship by incarnation;" whether there could or would be an attempted imitation of heathen myths; whether there is here evident a Babylonian influence; whether poetic forms have been made into literal prose; whether, in short, facts or fancies are the contents of these chapters.

JAMES STEVENSON RIGGS.

AUBURN, N. Y., January 26, 1906.

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

THE purpose of the present chapter is to make a full and frank statement of the difficulties involved in the documents as they stand, and in the traditional interpretation of them as genuinely historical.

Setting aside all merely captious and frivolous objections which have been urged by those who are in the habit of conducting what has been well called "guerrilla" warfare against the documents, I wish to bring the reader face to face with every genuine exegetical difficulty involved in the section, and to allow to each one all due force.

It is urged that we have two accounts of the Infancy, differing in tone, atmosphere, and understanding of the subject, and containing irreconcilable contradictions in the statement of facts. It seems impossible to fit together the accounts of Matthew and Luke so as to make a coherent and consistent account.

There are vast difficulties involved in the genealogies. Each Gospel professes to give the derivation of Jesus from the family of David through a genealogical line, but there are but two names in which they agree, and each counts a different number of generations.

Moreover, there is an apparently irreducible contradiction between the genealogies and the statement concerning the virgin birth.

The genealogies trace the origin of Jesus to David as

the theocratic head of the royal house, but reliance is placed wholly upon Joseph as the representative of that house. Matthew gives, clearly and definitely, the genealogy of Joseph. What significance in this connection has the genealogical derivation of Joseph, if he were nothing more than the foster father of Jesus? The Jews counted the generations through the male line, and inheritance was in all cases transmitted through the male heads of families. If Jesus was the son of David, according to the flesh, how can the conclusion be avoided that He was the son by ordinary generation of Joseph, the husband of Mary?[1]

Along with this is the great difference in viewpoint involved in the statements of the two accounts concerning the residence of Joseph and Mary.

Luke states that Joseph and Mary originally lived at Nazareth, and implies that, after the birth of Jesus, they naturally returned to their old home to live. He gives no hint of any danger threatening the child from Herod or from any other source. He passes at once from the birth of Jesus to the presentation in the temple, and the life at Nazareth. It looks as if he knew nothing of Herod's attempt to destroy the child, or the incidents connected therewith.

On the other hand, Matthew seems entirely ignorant of the previous residence at Nazareth, and introduces the fear of Archelaus as their reason for going to Nazareth from Egypt. There is difficulty involved in the attempt to fit the events told by Matthew into the structural framework of Luke's account.

Where are the massacre of the Innocents and the flight into Egypt to be placed? before or after the presentation in the temple?

[1] On this difficulty see Meyer, *Com. on Matt.*, vol. i, p. 65.

Luke's account[1] seems to imply an immediate return to Nazareth after the completion of all the religious duties involved in Mary's purification and the child's presentation, and the transition is so rapid that no room seems to be left for the important events recorded by Matthew.

There is, too, a striking difference in viewpoint involved in the relative importance attributed to Joseph and Mary in the two accounts. In Luke's story, Mary is the central figure, around whom all the persons, save only the child, are grouped. To her the annunciations are made, and her thoughts and feelings are the subject of description and the center of interest.

In Matthew's account, Joseph is brought to the foreground. The annunciations and dreams are vouchsafed to him, and his feelings and actions are continually emphasized.

The multiplication of supernatural interference in the progress of events by angelic appearances and inspired dreams has often been urged by critics against the historicity of the account.

But all these considerations are of slight moment compared with one, which is now to be stated.

The Infancy narrative apparently stands alone and unsupported by the rest of the New Testament. All that we know concerning the infancy, childhood, and early manhood of Jesus up to the time of His baptism at the Jordan, we know from these controverted portions of Matthew and Luke.

It is confidently affirmed that the story of the Infancy forms no part of the primitive Gospel; that the accounts in Matthew and Luke are legendary accretions to the genuine tradition of the apostles, who knew nothing about the virgin birth, the birth at Bethlehem, the massacre of

[1] Luke ii, 39.

the Innocents, the visit of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, or the return to Nazareth. It is affirmed with great confidence that the disciples during Jesus' life and throughout the entire apostolic age up to the time when the main body of the evangelic tradition was completed, believed that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary by the ordinary processes of nature. Furthermore, it is affirmed that the idea of Christ's virgin birth, and all the incidents connected with it, are purely mythical, developed in the absence of authentic information concerning Jesus' early life, partly out of the Old Testament, and partly by heathen influence. As a matter of fact, Christ was born of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth, where He lived, excepting for brief absences at Jerusalem for the temple ordinances and for visits to relatives, until the day of His manifestation at the Jordan.

We may take Keim's summary of results as a representative utterance of those who hold the negative view concerning the authority of the documents of the childhood: —

"As reliable historical remainder of the whole legend of the Infancy, there is but little left, and still enough: The birth (at Nazareth) in a pious Israelitish home, the circumcision on the eighth day, performed, it may be, by the father, a first-fruits of pain for this young life, by which, notwithstanding, it entered into the divine protection and communion, into federal relations with Israel and its holy ordinances, and, in conclusion, the name of Jesus, which, as Matthew hints, was given Him immediately after birth, or as the third Gospel tells us, may have been ultimately bestowed on Him at His circumcision by the parents and kinsfolk, most of all by His mother." [1]

[1] The literal historical facts, according to Holtzman (*L. J.*, p. 89) are these: "Jesus, then, was born at Nazareth in Galilee, the son of Joseph and Mary, being the eldest of five brothers and several sisters, and there He grew up."

What are the reasons adduced for the claim that the narratives of Matthew and Luke form no integral part of the primitive tradition of the Gospel?

There is, first, the argument from silence. Mark, John, and Paul are adduced as witnesses, especially against the central statement of the Infancy narrative, that Jesus was born of a virgin, and, in general, against the entire narrative.

Mark begins his narrative at the baptism, and, moreover, expressly states it as a definite beginning:[1] "Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Of the four evangelists, Mark is the best representative of the primitive Gospel in the early preaching of the apostles, and the beginning of his Gospel implies that the virgin birth was no part of their authoritative message. With this, it is alleged, the book of the Acts perfectly agrees. In the specimens of apostolic preaching exhibited in the narrative, the virgin birth and the other incidents of the Infancy story receive no mention and evidently had no place.

John's makes no mention of the miraculous origin of Jesus. His emphasis is upon the preëxistence of Christ and the reality of His incarnation, but he says nothing about the method by which Christ's incarnation was accomplished.

Paul also lays no stress upon the manner of Christ's entrance into the world. He seems to be in direct conflict with the idea of the virgin birth in that he asserts with great emphasis Jesus' sonship to David according to the flesh, and the expression which he uses[2] to describe His relationship to David "would be singularly inappropriate if Jesus had not come into the world in the ordinary way."[3]

We have then, apparently, this result, that three of the

[1] Mark i, 1.

[2] Romans i, 3. Cf. 2 Timothy ii, 8.

[3] Lobstein, p. 52.

greatest exponents of New Testament thought and teaching ignore all the statements made in the section of the Gospels under review. It is argued that this fact can point to no other conclusion than that the Infancy section is no part of the authoritative tradition, and therefore no secure ground of faith.

It is likewise argued, with great assurance, that there are traces of another tradition, ancient and authentic, to be found in the Infancy section itself, and in other parts of the narrative, that Jesus was the son of Joseph.

It is pointed out as present even in the genealogies. Lobstein says: "Both genealogies try to prove that Jesus was truly the Messiah by recording the succession of His ancestors in direct line from King David to Joseph, the husband of Mary. It is beyond dispute that in the mind of both genealogists Jesus is the son of Joseph. Had they possessed the slightest idea of a miraculous birth, they would have drawn up the genealogy of Mary, not of Joseph."[1]

The ancient tradition is more clearly manifest in Luke's statement that Joseph and Mary were puzzled[2] by the words of Jesus, in reply to Mary's reproachful question, that He must be concerned in the things of His Father. Would Joseph and Mary have been puzzled if they had had in their minds the wonderful events which preceded and accompanied His birth? Would they not have been prepared for any unusual manifestation of self-consciousness in the budding Messiahship of Mary's marvelous Son? This sentence is taken to be an authentic survival of the time when Jesus was believed to be the son of Joseph as well as of Mary, before the wonders connected with His birth had been imagined.

This same consideration is urged in connection with the

[1] Lobstein, pp. 45, 46. [2] Luke ii, 50.

incident recorded of Mary and His brethren in Matthew xii, 46-50, taken in connection with Mark iii, 21, which is probably an echo of the same incidents, or of a similar one. Would Mary have ventured thus to interfere with Christ in His mission and work, if she had carried in her mind the cherished memory of those wondrous scenes of promise and fulfillment which were connected with the birth of her son?

This same connection with a primitive tradition is claimed for those passages scattered through the Gospels, in which Jesus is spoken of as the son of Joseph [1] and the carpenter's son, and the allied passages in which His "parents" [2] are spoken of. Keim maintains that there was an unbroken tradition of the natural birth in Jewish-Christian circles dating from the earliest time and persisting along with the other tradition into the second century.

These, I think, constitute the real difficulties connected with the Infancy section, and they are certainly, on the surface, formidable enough. Keim's arguments against the account on the ground of the distance to Egypt, the unreasonableness of going to Egypt at all, and other considerations of a similar nature, seem to me to have little weight. It would be simply impossible for two men to narrate from different points of view, and for different purposes, a series of events such as is contained in the double narrative of Matthew and Luke without leaving it open to *a priori* objection.

These are doctrinal and philosophical objections urged against the virgin birth, but with these I am not now concerned. The question is primarily one of evidence; the matter of doctrinal construction is entirely secondary. The exegetical and critical difficulties outlined above are

[1] John i, 45; vi, 42; Matt. xiii, 55.
[2] Luke ii, 27, 41.

real and of vital importance, and must be squarely and honestly met. I propose to question the witnesses and to attempt the establishment of my views on purely critical grounds. I make no requisition upon the doctrine of inspiration, and no appeal to the authority of the church. My purpose is to set forth the grounds upon which I have reached the conclusion that the Infancy section is a substantially accurate historical record. That this conclusion, if established, will contribute an argument for inspiration and also for the authority of the church as the guardian of the truth is clear; but this is the conclusion of the argument, not the basis of it.

In view of the difficulties involved in these two accounts, is there sufficient motive for attempting to retain them? If we follow the advice of the negative critics and abandon this entire preliminary Gospel as mythical and untrustworthy, are we thereby greatly impoverished? or are we relieved from a weight and an embarrassment? Are we to mourn a loss or rejoice in an enrichment through deliverance from a burden?

It is my belief that in the abandonment of the Infancy section we should be losers, and large losers, but I am quite sure that we have not always correctly understood just what our losses would be. I do not believe, nor can I for one moment admit, that this discussion involves the stability or integrity of the Christian faith as a whole. If we are compelled by the results of sane and intelligent criticism to abandon the preliminary sections of Matthew and Luke with all that they contain, we are not driven thereby to abandon our Christian heritage.

The religion of Christ is broadly and firmly established, —based upon what He was as revealed in the manifold portrait of Him by those who knew Him best. That face, in which shines the light of the knowledge of the

glory of God, can never be destroyed by the blotting out of any one detail, or the erasure from the sacred text of any one item. Let it not be forgotten that the utmost that negative criticism, working upon these texts, can do is to throw into the shadow of uncertainty the actual facts concerning the early life of Jesus. If it can force us to abandon our positive statements concerning the mode of His entrance into the world and the simple details hitherto confessed as Gospel concerning His early life, it is not itself thereby enabled to make any positive statement whatsoever. Many seem to take it for granted that by the overthrow of the historic belief concerning Christ's nativity they are enabled to substitute a positive statement of their own as to the facts of the birth and infancy, but this assumption, as I shall proceed to show, is a fallacious begging of the question. There is but one rational attitude for those who accept the results of the negative criticism of the Infancy sections, and that is to say in reply to all mental questionings concerning the early life of Jesus, "We do not know."

The position thus reached need not necessarily affect our attitude toward the rest of the sacred story. What Jesus was in His maturity as a teacher, as a healer of disease, as a friend of men and a servant of God, is clearly seen in the record. We may accept that as the basis of our faith; in the absence of authentic information concerning His previous life we may be reverently silent, and yet remain His followers and rejoice in His light. I agree altogether with Lange when he says that "without the virgin birth a man cannot understand any incident of Christ's life perfectly;" but that with the virgin birth we are able to interpret His life perfectly, is too large an assumption to make, for we may easily overlook or underestimate some other fact equally vital. The omission of the infancy and youth of

Jesus from our interpretation of Him will result, without question, in a mutilation of our Christology, but it will leave us enough to establish the validity of our Christian hope, and form a secure basis for Christian life and service.

Why, then, conduct any crusade on behalf of the controverted section of the Gospel? I answer: First, because, it is in itself so serious a mutilation. Without the controverted section, we have no Gospel of the infancy and youth of Jesus. We have no Christmas message. I am aware that Lobstein has constructed his argument for the very purpose of conserving the religious value of the narrative while surrendering its historicity. He would retain for us the Christmas message while denying an objective basis to the account of Christ's birth. It must be confessed that while this theory makes a promise to the ear it breaks it to the heart. The essential core of the Christmas message is that the very Christ of God was born as a little child, and with this the singing of the angels, the virgin birth, the visit of the wise men, perfectly accord.

The alternative which this theory presents is that Jesus of Nazareth, who afterwards at the baptism or in the wilderness, by union with the Divine Spirit became the Christ, was born in Nazareth of Joseph and Mary. This latter theory does not retain in any real sense the humiliation of Christ. It does imply a deification of man, but no humiliation of the Lord of Glory. All that is left to us by the theory of Lobstein is that the virgin birth is a secondary and inferior and essentially incorrect attempt on the part of the church to construe the person of Christ. Keim's poetical-legendary interpretation leaves the whole account separated from the fact, a rainbow of imaginary embellishments about the cradle of the Messiah, a garland of cut flowers without root in the reality of history,

bound to wither and fade, as any mere poetry must, which has been made to do the duty of fact.

The entire art and literature of Christmas, the hymns of the nativity, the pictures of the Virgin, the sanctities of thought and feeling which have gathered round Bethlehem, must be interpreted to the coming generation with this footnote: "All these things are beautiful as poetry, but untrustworthy as history. According to poetry, Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary in the stable of the Khan at Bethlehem; according to history He was born of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth."

I am well aware that this consideration is by no means final. We should be prepared, if candor demands it, to make the sacrifice, but we should not be blinded by rhetoric to the exact consequences of what we are doing, nor submit to having foisted upon us the imaginations of modern critics in place of the accounts of Matthew and Luke, for the so-called historical substitute for the narrative is as absolutely imaginary and fabulous as anything can possibly be in the accounts which it displaces. Those who believe that because it is discredited that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary at Bethlehem, it is therefore firmly established that He was born of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth, are easily satisfied. As a matter of fact, the same sort of criticism, which has for many destroyed the trustworthiness of the Infancy documents, if relentlessly and rigorously applied, leaves not a shred of certainty for the entire period previous to the appearance at the Jordan.

The residuum which Keim leaves for us from the Infancy legend is itself in some of its component parts open to serious objection. The name Jesus, for example, though it is consistently applied to the hero throughout the New Testament, is very suspicious in its origin. It is

bestowed upon Him before His birth by the angel of the Annunciation, and is so obviously connected with Israelitish theocratic hopes as to lend color to the supposition that it might have been bestowed upon Him, like the epithet Christ, by the enthusiasm of His followers, who were always eager to unite Him with the Old Testament.

Joseph's connection with the family is exceedingly dubious. Mark does not mention him, neither does Paul, and the latter, by implication, excludes him. More than that, the way in which Joseph's genealogy is used to establish the Davidic origin of Jesus suggests the possibility that his historic name and his royal lineage led the disciples to imagine a closer relationship with him than the facts would justify. His connection with Jesus seems so fanciful, and his disappearance so sudden and complete, as to give an air of unreality to the whole account concerning him. How do we know that Joseph and Mary were married at all? The general belief in the marriage of Joseph and Mary, apart from the account in the Infancy section, rests upon the implication of two indirect statements[1] of John's Gospel, which Keim would not have us rate too highly as an authority.

It may be doubtful whether Jesus was born at Bethlehem; it is certainly no assured result of criticism that He was born at Nazareth. We have a strong consensus of testimony that He lived there, but no unshakable evidence that He was born there. The very fact that we have a legend that He was born at Bethlehem is evidence enough that it is by no means certain that He was born at Nazareth. Such a legend could grow up only in an atmosphere of uncertainty. Conjecture does not flourish in the presence of assured and incontrovertible fact. In short, by the rejection of the preliminary section of the

[1] John i, 45; vi, 42.

first and third Gospels as documentary evidence worthy of trust, we are logically forced to a position of nescience concerning the time, place, circumstances, and conditions of the Saviour's birth. We have no distinctly Christmas message.

But the loss is more serious than this. By the rejection of this preliminary portion of the Gospel, we are deprived of the use of important data in the development of Christ's self-consciousness.

I am concerned more for the account which Luke gives of the natural infancy, the gradual growth in body, mind, and spirit of the Son of man, and that incomparable exhibition of the dawning of His consciousness of a unique relationship with the Father given in the incident in the temple, than for the virgin birth considered in the abstract and by itself. We cannot have Luke's picture of the growing of Christ without the virgin birth; for it is part of one and the same undivided testimony.

It would be well for those who occupy the negative attitude toward these documents to ponder deeply their actual historical influence upon the thought of the church. They have been fiercely attacked from the beginning, but we ought to love them for the enemies they have made. From two sides the attacks have converged upon the Gospel of the Infancy, in both cases in the interests of a mutilated Gospel. The Ebionites attacked the virgin birth because they denied the essential divinity of Christ. They claimed that the man Jesus, born of the union of Joseph and Mary, became Messiah by union with the Divine Spirit at His baptism. They rejected the entire Gospel of the Infancy, because it put the inspiration in the life of Jesus too far back and brought Him too close to the divine.

On totally different grounds the Gnostics attacked the

Infancy story. They were dualists, who maintained the inherent and necessary corruption of matter. They could not believe it possible for the Son of God to be born of a woman, to be a child, or to live as a real man in the flesh. This would be not a humiliation, but a degradation. Both parties to this concerted attack denied the actual reality of the Incarnation.

I believe that it is not too much to say that every doctrinal attack upon the validity of the Infancy document is animated by feelings akin to those of the Ebionites and Gnostics. The more serious of the two heresies (if one may make a comparison in a case where both would have been fatal to Christianity as an universal religion) was the Gnostic, which really issues in a denial of our Lord's humanity.

It was not difficult for men, to whom Christ brought such a fresh and wonderful revelation of the unseen God and the meaning of life, to accept Him as divine, but it was almost impossible to accept Him as at once divine and human. It was the historic task of the Infancy documents through arid ages of dogma to keep alive faith in the human Christ, for men could not cut Him loose from real participation in human life and experience so long as they held before them the authoritative documents which asserted His real birth and His genuine childhood.

On the other hand, the Infancy documents resist, by their central affirmation of the miraculous birth, all attempts to separate the human Jesus from the eternal Christ. Their connection with this entire stream of tendency is clearly and forcibly expressed by Lange:—

"The remembrance which the church has preserved, and the testimony she has given to the childhood of the Lord Jesus, form a series of incidents, together displaying in artless, poetical, and sacred delineation, the full reality

and historic nature on one side; on the other, the perfect ideality of the individual life of Jesus in its beginnings and earliest events. They form a cycle; they manifest themselves, by the most speaking facts, to belong to the Christology of the childhood of Jesus. This cycle is naturally a circle of most mysterious and tender images, exhibiting the beauties and graces, as well as the terrors, of poetry in the most absolute reality. These images only differ from many of the productions of actual poetry by surpassing, in their strict conformity to the due proportions of ideal perfection, all that is glaring and enthusiastic in more ordinary poetry and, at the same time, all the images of fancy. Their reality has always had the effect of banishing from the center of Christian doctrine the mutilated forms of Ebionitism, which cannot believe in the full spiritual glorification of corporeity.

"In our days, indeed, the history of Christ's childhood seems to have been almost abandoned to Ebionitism. The practice of removing the ideality of Christ's life to greater and still greater distances from its commencement has been constantly persisted in. At first, in accordance with the views of the ancient Ebionites and Socinians, it was not till His baptism that He was allowed to become the Son of God; then, not till long after His baptism and after having, as was supposed, first passed through the school of John the Baptist. Again, another advance was made, and it was said that it was not till after His death that the image of Christ was produced, as an embellished image of the actual Christ. And, further still, Paul is said to have been the inventor of mature, universal Christianity. A new station is next formed by the opinion that the perfectly ideal, or, as it is rather thought, idealistic, view of the life of Christ, given in pseudo-Gospel of John, did not arise till about the end of the second century. At

last, even the present times are passed by, and Christianity is first to become a truth in the times of the Coming Spirit. These spouting prophets of a spirit who is not to kindle but to extinguish the light of the Gospel history take one step further, and expect, with the Jews, the advent of the Messiah in a new religion. Such is the historical progress of Ebionitism.

"It is a part of the notion of Christianity that, as the incarnate Word, it should be perfect from its very origin. Christianity is distinctively a new principle of all improvement, and cannot itself meanwhile need improvement. It is the principle of the identity of the eternal Word and human corporeity, of real and ideal life; it therefore rejects every attempt to introduce into its origin that incongruence between the ideal and life which oppresses the ancient æon. It comes forth from the heart of God, as a new and miraculous life; hence a halo of miracles is formed around this central miracle; the rays of the rising sun."[1]

From this fine and truthful historical summary, I take for repetition and particular emphasis this one sentence: "Their reality has always had the effect of banishing from the center of Christian doctrine the mutilated forms of Ebionitism, which cannot believe in the full spiritual glorification of corporeity."

We have, then, this historical situation: That against the tendencies of Ebionitism and Gnosticism the Infancy section has contributed its full quota, in proportion to the rest of the Gospel, to the maintenance of that complete, full-orbed, Catholic faith which holds equally and firmly to the divine and human Christ; and the dynamic of that important contribution to Christian thought is the miraculous birth in conjunction with the real childhood of Jesus.

[1] Lange, *Life of Christ*, Am. ed., 1872, vol. i, pp. 257, 258.

A document with such a history will not readily be discredited, nor ought it to be lightly surrendered.

There is also a motive for the defense of the Infancy documents to be found in their relationship to the general question of the character for trustworthiness of the New Testament.

Our views as to the preliminary section of the Gospels do not necessarily determine our views of the New Testament documents as a whole, but that they have a tendency in logical minds thus to do cannot be doubted.

That so considerable a modification of the true history as is involved in the visit to Bethlehem and the virgin birth, the coming of the Magi, the slaughter of the Innocents, the flight into Egypt, could be introduced so early into the evangelic tradition that only slight traces, if any, of other teaching appear, casts suspicion upon the whole process by which the New Testament was formed. There is no more reason, textually speaking, to suspect the preliminary sections of Matthew and Luke than any other portions of those Gospels. There is no better reason for supposing that loose mythical material has been gathered into the Infancy sections than for supposing that such material has been gathered into other parts of the New Testament.

No question of criticism can be treated absolutely alone in complete isolation from questions generically related to it. And the logical mind is driven by inherent necessity from one conclusion to another. I must therefore record my conviction that the tendency of the criticism which has been directed against this section of the Gospel is to lead one to a general skepticism concerning the authenticity and authority of the documents of the evangelic tradition, which is not justified by the facts.

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Soltau

introduces his attack upon the Infancy section of the Gospel by considerations which tend to discredit many other sections of the New Testament as well.[1]

I may also record the conviction that the same treatment which has been accorded to the preliminary part of the Gospel would, if rigorously carried out, destroy not only the testimony to the incidents of Christ's life, but much of the testimony upon which rests our confidence in general history.[2]

As I conceive it, therefore, there is abundant justification on the ground of the issues involved for a vigorous defense of the controverted sections of the Gospel, in so far as this may be done with intelligence and candor.

In view of these considerations, also, it may be well to emphasize that the burden of proof rests with those who make the attack. They are bound to give a clear, consistent account of the rise of the beliefs involved in the sections under review and a convincing demonstration that the surrender of the documents involves no serious mutilation of Christian doctrine.

Let us listen, then, to what they have to say. Let us begin with a theory which is more or less involved in every attempt to destroy the authority of the Infancy sections,—I mean the theory that Old Testament prophecy is responsible for the incidents narrated in them.

[1] Soltau, *The Birth of Jesus Christ*, p. 9. On Soltau's general critical position, see *Exp. Times*, vol. xiii, p. 75.

[2] See Bruce, *Miraculous Element in Gospels*, p. 364.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES IN THE FORMATION OF THE INFANCY STORY[1]

At the outset of the inquiry concerning the authority of the preliminary sections of Matthew and Luke, we are met with the important question concerning the influence of the prophecies of the Old Testament in the formation of the biography of Christ. In all the forms which the mythical hypothesis of the life of Christ has assumed, the Messianic expectations of the Jews at the time of Christ and their interpretation and use of supposedly predictive passages of the Old Testament necessarily play an important rôle.

The older apologetics made much of the fulfillments of ancient oracles in the unfolding of history, and especially in the life of the world's Redeemer. Prophecy and history, prediction and event, were made to fit together in minute and intimate correspondence. Prophecy, according to this view, is history enfolded; history, prophecy unfolded.

It is, of course, perfectly evident that those who deny the supernatural element in the Scriptures and in history could not admit the thought of any such minute correspondence between specific predictions in the Old Testament and specific events recorded in the New, without

[1] For a statement of the part played by this theory in the discussion, see Appendix, note A, The History of the Discussion.

fatally compromising their position. The fact once admitted, its bearing upon the question of the supernatural is inescapable. The argument was tempting, but dangerous. Rationalism cleverly turned the tables on those who made use of the argument from prophecy to fulfillment by a simple two-fold device, the operation of which for some time practically nullified the entire force and meaning of the argument from prophecy.

It is argued that in many alleged cases of fulfillment the passage from the Old Testament was not predictive at all and did not refer to the Messiah, and hence was not and could not have been fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

According to this method the attempt is made to break the tie between the Old Testament and the New by impugning the exegetical methods of the New Testament writers. The biographers of Jesus, especially Matthew, and the other writers of the New Testament, made an unjustifiable use of the older book of revelation. They took passages at random, wrenched them from the context, interpreted them without regard to their historic setting, and violently made them to apply to incidents with which they had no real connection.

The other half of the device is, in cases where the exegetical argument fails to apply, to give the prophetic passage the credit of creating the incident with which it is connected. A familiar Old Testament passage has been popularly interpreted as applying to the Messiah. Since it was in common circulation, the disciples of Jesus were, of course, acquainted with it. They felt in a dim but enthusiastic way that every such passage must apply to Jesus, and under the stress of the mythic tendency the incident was created.

In connection with this question, it is to be noticed that if we are compelled to a choice between the horns

of the dilemma thus forced upon us, the believer in the New Testament cannot hesitate for a moment. The results of the two methods are not equal.

The first method, even if successfully applied, does not destroy the harmony between the Old and the New Testaments, prophecy and the life of Christ, which rests upon a sounder foundation than specific fulfillments of specific predictions, nor does it impugn the substantial historic accuracy of the Gospels. If the writers of the Gospels were simply guilty of making incorrect application of Old Testament texts to events within their knowledge, we are still on the firm ground of history, and need have no uneasiness concerning the essential facts. The hypothesis simply delimits their literary inspiration. If successfully maintained, it shows that they adopted the literary methods of their own day, and the Spirit of inspiration did not see fit to dictate their use of the Old Testament.

The other method, however, cuts at the root of things. If it be proved that the disciples, under the influence of the mythic temper, invented incidents for the life of Christ to fit Old Testament predictions, much has been done to undermine the entire fabric of New Testament trustworthiness. The testimony of the writers to any important fact is then worth very little. The subtlety of the method and its wide applicability may be seen in some of the uses made of it. For example, Harnack, in "What Is Christianity?" in attempting to group the stories of miracles in the New Testament according to the causes operating in their production, cites "stories such as arose in the interests of the fulfillment of Old Testament sayings."

The second method can be applied only to a part of the passages in question, though it is the most important part. If the connection between the prediction and the event is remote, or, if the passage is fairly open to the charge of

being fanciful or is merely illustrative, the generic relationship between the two cannot successfully be maintained.

I propose now to deal somewhat in detail with the passages to which the second method is applicable, confining attention to those in the section under review.

This discussion is vitally related to tne question of Christ's birth, and the controversy may be brought to an issue in the preliminary section of the Gospel of Matthew.

The hypothesis, therefore, stands before us. The elements of the process are these: (1) An Old Testament prediction in common circulation among the Jews who had become Christians. (2) A blank space in the life of Christ. (3) The operation of the mythic temper by which the blank space is filled with an incident created in harmony with the prophecy.

It is perhaps fair to say that in many instances, instead of the absolutely blank space in Christ's life, there is a simple and natural incident devoid of the supernatural which readily lends itself to exaggeration. The process, however, is practically the same.

Before we come to the examination of specific passages, there are a few observations to be offered on the hypothesis in general.

In the first place there is a problem to be solved in connection with the use of specific passages. There are in the Gospel of Matthew thirty-seven quotations from the Old Testament, taken from eleven or twelve books, and closely interwoven with the incidents of Christ's life. This number, large in proportion to the size of the Gospel, is small by comparison with the total number of Old Testament passages commonly receiving a Messianic interpretation. It is, in fact, a mere selection.

Now a selection of this kind must have been made either at random or in accordance with some unifying principle

—for why should these thirty-seven passages have been chosen rather than any other thirty-seven out of the vast number available?[1] If the passages were chosen at random by disciples who blindly picked up any passage that seemed likely to fit the life of the Messiah, then the result would necessarily have lacked unity and harmony. A homogeneous product would be impossible by such a method.

It is inconceivable that the passages as a whole should have created a life such as we find in the Gospels; for the total effect of so many passages of varying import upon a mind which had no organizing principle to aid it in selection would have been confusion and contradiction. No harmonious life could have issued from such a process. The mere numerical chance, that any one passage should have issued in the creation of an incident without some independent principle at work in the mind of the disciple choosing, is very small.

General principles, such as the desire to prove the Messiahship of Jesus from the Old Testament, or to glorify His person, do not fit the case, for, conceivably, other passages and incidents might prove His Messiahship and glorify His person just as well as those actually chosen. The general hypothesis, therefore, that the life of Christ was created out of very meager materials by the operation of the mythic spirit upon the raw materials of Old Testament prophecy and popular expectation, is too heavy to stand. An hypothesis that cannot be applied on the large scale to phenomena so homogeneous as the life of Christ is very precarious when applied to specific instances.

A second remark that must be made is that the mythic temper works in the line of preconceived notions. No

[1] For a list of passages Messianically applied, see Edersheim, *L. and T. J. M.*, vol. ii, Appendix ix.

sane mind, however enthusiastic and uncritical, will imagine incidents in contradiction to its own cherished convictions. No normal mind, however blindly idolatrous in the worship of a hero, would imagine events for the adornment of his personality which, according to the accepted standard of his time, are considered disgraceful. For example, an enthusiastic Japanese student of history not long ago propounded the theory that the Mikados were of Korean ancestry. His statement was met with a storm of indignant protest, and punishment was meted out to his reckless and impertinent iconoclasm. It is not to be believed that any Japanese would deliberately invent such an hypothesis as the one outlined above in order to honor his emperor and exalt him before his countrymen. No more would the friends of Jesus, however blindly enthusiastic, be tempted to invent an incident for His life which, in the common judgment of the day, would be considered disgraceful.

The bearing of these observations upon the question at issue will be seen a little later. Our next step is to examine the theory in the light of the specific passages in question.

The passage from Jeremiah,[1] which Matthew applies to the slaughter of the Innocents, need not detain us long. This paragraph could not possibly have suggested the incident, for two reasons, either one of which would seem to be entirely sufficient.

In the first place, the passage as Jeremiah originally wrote it was a bold and beautiful figure of speech, and nothing more. In a striking hyperbole he represents Rachel, then for centuries asleep in her quiet tomb, as weeping over the slaughter of her descendants, the passionate sons of Benjamin and their allies, an event which

[1] Jer. xxxi, 15.

took place near Ramah, Rachel's burial place. The passage was purely literary and figurative, and could not possibly be interpreted as predictive. The incident which Jeremiah describes and that which Matthew describes has but one element in common,—the shedding of blood. In all other respects they are absolutely and strikingly unlike. That the one suggested the other it is well-nigh impossible to believe.

In the second place, it required a new and original adaptation of the figure to apply it to any incident connected with Bethlehem. Rachel is historically identified, not with Judah, but with Benjamin. Her burial place is uniformly represented as being in the neighborhood of Bethel, "on the border of Benjamin."[1] Only one passage (Gen. xxxv, 19) connects her with Bethlehem. The contradiction between this statement and the rest of the Old Testament is so apparent as to point to the conclusion that the explanatory formula was an incorrect marginal note which ultimately crept into the text.

Now the Genesis passage contains no hint of the slaughter (of course), nor any hint of Ramah, while Jeremiah says nothing of Bethlehem, but indicates Ramah in Benjamin as the locality of the slaughter. If the incident told by Matthew was created by the influence of the Old Testament, it was done through a fusion of these two contradictory passages into one impression. The writer was impressed by the locality element of the Genesis passage, and by the slaughter element of the Jeremiah passage, so as to transfer the slaughter spoken of by Jeremiah to the place spoken of in Genesis, while he yet retains the word Ramah, which marks the contradiction between the two. This is an altogether impossible supposition.

We next come to the third passage in the preliminary

[1] 1 Sam. x, 2.

section of Matthew,—the quotation from Hosea xi, 1, applied to the flight into Egypt, "Out of Egypt did I call my son." The peculiarity in this quotation is that it is taken from the Hebrew text and differs from the Septuagint in the use of the singular noun. The difference is not accidental. In it consists the entire applicability of the quotation. The writer was compelled to use the Hebrew form in the singular in order to apply it to Christ. This fact is interesting and valuable, because of the light thus thrown upon the way in which the quotation came into the text, and upon the personality of the man who used it. The text could not have been one of those Messianic texts floating in the common consciousness; for in the form in which it was accessible to the common mind it had no applicability to the Messiah at all.

The phrase, "Out of Egypt did I call thy children," could not possibly suggest to any mind that the Messiah, or any other individual, must go down into Egypt and come back again. It could be thus suggestive only in the Hebrew form and to one familiar with it in that form. In addition to this, it is evident that whatever suggested the flight into Egypt must also have suggested the incident of Herod's murderous purpose which caused the flight, and also the visit of the Magi, with which the entire incident is bound up.

Either the passage from Hosea suggested the entire nexus of events with which it is connected, in which case it must be acknowledged to be one of the most pregnant texts of prophecy, or else the text simply suggested the central incident of the flight into Egypt, and the writer invented all the rest to account for the flight,—a rather elaborate and unbelievable hypothesis.

It is unreasonable to suppose that it should have started up such imaginative activity in a mind sufficiently trained

to discriminate between versions, and cold enough to choose so carefully the version by which to be moved.

It may reasonably be objected that this argument is wasted because no one would seriously urge that this particular passage created the incident with which it is connected. The analysis, however, has its bearing upon other texts far more central and important.

We next take up the passage from Micah,[1] which is applied to the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. This text is most confidently pointed to as evidence of the power of a Messianic text to create the expectation out of which has issued a fictitious series of events. The questioning of the Jewish leaders by Herod drew forth the response that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem. This points to a widespread and prevalent notion that the Messiah should be manifested in the City of David. This in course of time, developed the conviction that Christ, whom they confidently believed to be the Messiah, was actually born there. What more natural than that such a notice should by " dogmatic reflection " be developed into the conviction that the event had actually thus occurred? Keim thinks it a very simple case.

A little closer study, however, will show that it is not so simple as it at first appears. In the first place, how did it come about that any Jew believed Jesus to be the Messiah? Given the faith that Jesus actually was the Messiah, the belief that He was born at Bethlehem might arise, but the initial faith, which is the mainspring of the entire process, is one of the things to be accounted for. Would not the birth at Bethlehem be one of the elements in the body of evidence to prove that Jesus was the Messiah? If there was a widespread conviction that the Messiah must be born at Bethlehem, strong enough to

[1] Micah v, 2.

overbear the actual facts and create the conviction that He was born there, when He was not, it was certainly strong enough to lead men, at least men of a skeptical temper, to investigate the question before giving their allegiance to the candidate for the Messiahship. We know certainly that the question came up. Nathanael's sneer at Nazareth, and the argument of the Jews that no prophet could come out of Galilee, is the negative statement, and the question of the objectors, "Hath not the scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"[1] the positive statement of the requirement.

Both positively and negatively, this argument was urged against Jesus, and His disciples were compelled to make answer. If it be objected that the argument of the Jews against Jesus on this ground led to the invention of the story of the Bethlehem birth, the answer is easy: The theory implies deliberate dishonesty on the part of the disciples, and is therefore absurd.

There is still more to be said on the subject of this prophecy. There is a certain distinct and individual atmosphere about the passage, to which a mind saturated with the spirit of the Old Testament could not fail to be sensitive. One need not hesitate to say that the record of happenings at Bethlehem is not in accord with the outstanding features of the prophecy as any ordinary interpreter, not especially illuminated, would understand it. The prophet contrasts, and with high lights and deep shadows draws his picture, the humble standing and rural situation of Bethlehem with the exalted position and far-reaching authority of the Ruler who should issue from her. The little town of Bethlehem should be distinguished by the appearance of the great Governor in her midst.

[1] John vii, 42.

This is easily applicable to Christ, as seen in the light of after history; but is there anything in it which would lead a Jewish interpreter to imagine the incidents recorded in the Infancy narrative? The passage clearly points to the beginning of the Great Ruler's life at Bethlehem, but it points, also, and superficially considered, just as clearly, to a royal birth under royal conditions. The text was one of those which helped to create that ideal of a political and conquering Messiah who should come visibly robed in the garments of authority, in view of which the claims made on behalf of the humble Nazarene were contemptuously rejected by the Jewish people as a whole.

How could Micah's stately description be applied to a Child, even if born at Bethlehem and of David's stock, of whom such things as these could be said: That He happened to be born at Bethlehem because He, like His nation and His family, was subject to the detested rule of Rome; that His mother was so devoid of influence as to be compelled, because the khan was crowded, to bring forth her Child in a stable; that she was so utterly powerless that the wise men who visited her Child from afar had to skulk away in secret flight from the new-found King; and that He Himself was driven forth from His country merely by the uplifted hand of the hated Herod? Strange fulfillment these details furnish of the prophetic sentence, which speaks of the advent of a world Ruler whose goings forth have been of old from the days of eternity.

It is fair to say that, while the mere fact that Jesus was born at Bethlehem accords with the prophecy, the circumstances and surroundings of it as described in the New Testament utterly contradict the passage as generally interpreted by the Jews of Jesus' time. It could not possibly have led in any naturally constituted mind to the construction of the incidents with which it is connected.

We now come to the crucial passage of the section,—the prophecy from Isaiah,[1] which is applied to the virgin birth. If one were ever so much disposed to believe that prophecies under certain circumstances might give rise to imaginary incidents concerning Him, there is much in the present instance to make one pause before accepting the hypothesis. Given a blind and not too scrupulous enthusiasm for Jesus, and an equally faulty use of Old Testament passages, incidents such as miracles of power might conceivably be imagined. But the difficulties in the way of accepting the virgin birth as one of these are insuperable. In this case the hypothesis grants nothing for the process save the Christian enthusiasm working upon the Messianic text. There can be no germ of incident lending itself to fond exaggeration which has issued in the doctrine of a miraculous birth. It is either a fact or a myth created *in toto* out of the prophecy by the heated imagination of admirers of Jesus. By the hypothesis, there is not even a tradition to defend nor an *a priori* dogmatic thesis to maintain.

Granting for the time that among the disciples of Jesus there were some sufficiently enslaved to their own imaginations to allow themselves to be worked upon by isolated Messianic texts, one would suppose that in this instance the slightest exercise of sober second thought would have rendered such an exceedingly dubious process entirely impossible. Even among the most blindly enthusiastic of those with whom the idea originated, there ought to have been discernment enough to perceive the danger to faith lurking in the doctrine. There is no evidence to show that among the Hebrews of Jesus' time any general expectation existed that the Messiah was to be virgin born. There is no evidence outside Matthew's

[1] Isa. vii, 14.

Gospel that the passage from Isaiah had created such an impression. The interpretation must have been as original as the doctrine. The mere shock of surprise involved in a theory so alien to ordinary Hebrew thought as a virgin birth must have been a dash upon the white heat of enthusiasm hard to resist. It is very difficult to understand how any group of Jewish Christians could have been prevailed upon by the influence of a single text to formulate so novel, and, according to their ways of thinking, so forbidding, a doctrine as the virgin birth.

But the case is still more difficult than this. The passage in question was quoted from the Septuagint version, which translates the Hebrew word עַלְמָה by the Greek παρθένος.

The usual contention of negative criticism is that this is "an inadmissible translation."[1] If this contention is justified, the case of those who hold that the prophecy created the incident goes utterly by the board; for in that case, the text could have led to the creation of the doctrine only in minds having no strong prepossession against the doctrine, and without the critical apparatus to study the relationship of the passage in the Greek translation to the original text.

No man having a natural prejudice against the theory of a virgin birth could have been so tyrannized over by a single doubtful passage, unless incapable through ignorance of appealing to the authoritative text of the passage in question.

As we have already seen, the author of the preliminary section of Matthew's Gospel was at home in the Hebrew text.[2] He was in the habit of setting one version over

[1] It is held that the Hebrew word simply means "a young woman of marriageable age."

[2] See Weiss, *In. to N. T.*, vol. ii, p. 275.

against the other. In his use of the passage from Hosea he set aside the popular version as unsuited to his purpose, and chose the Hebrew. In the present instance, there is no occasion for doubt that he chose the Septuagint for the same reason. He could not have been ignorant of the difference between the versions. While he evidently differed from those who believed that the Septuagint form is an inadmissible translation, he must have known that a translation shutting out the virgin idea altogether would be perfectly natural and legitimate. He must, therefore, have had strong reasons for preferring the Septuagint form.

Furthermore, the author of the section was intensely Jewish. The entire Messianic conception which underlies the Gospel, and not least of all the earlier part of it, is profoundly Hebraic. The author must have shared the feelings and prejudices of the Hebrews of the Old Testament type, of whom not a few lived in Christ's time. Among these intense feelings, not the least powerful was a conception of the sacredness of marriage, and abhorrence of all heathen notions of physical deities and incarnations. Both these prejudices, which were intense and unyielding, must have combined to create in the mind of every well-taught Hebrew a strong bias against the doctrine of an incarnation of the Messiah by birth from a virgin, very hard indeed to overcome. There is indubitable evidence in the section before us that the author shared in this feeling. Had there been nothing to force him to admit the statement into his story, save only a doubtful interpretation of this one passage, his mental bias would have found an escape, through another rendering of the Hebrew text, easy and welcome.[1]

[1] For the Jewish position on the question of the translation of the passage, see Justin, *Dial.*, cap. lxvii.

We have now passed in review the chief prophetic passages quoted in the section, and it has become clear that the theory in question does not hold in any single instance. It is impossible, in the light of the facts fairly interpreted, to maintain that any one of them created the incident with which it is connected. In most instances the connection is so figurative and ideal as to compel one to the belief that the passages were searched for by a writer keen to adorn his narrative and to illustrate its incidents by prophetic sentences that served in his mind to bind the vision of the prophets and the life of the Christ together.

But, it is objected, if the connection between the passages used by the author of Matthew's Gospel and the incidents with which he unites them is thus figurative, ideal, illustrative, what is left of the fulfillment of prophecy? What remains of the connection between the old covenant and the new, and of the argument of the Gospel for the Messiahship of Jesus? Much, in every way; but it is not to be looked for chiefly in merely incidental resemblances between the words of prophets and the life of Christ.[1]

Let us argue the question broadly and candidly. Is it conceivable that Matthew should base his argument for the Messiahship of Jesus on incidental and almost accidental resemblances between predictions and events, such as he brings together in some of the passages quoted from the Old Testament? Is it possible that a man intelligent enough to write or edit the Gospel of Matthew was not as well aware as we that the real claim of Jesus to be the Messiah lay in His moral and spiritual transcendence? He could not have been ignorant that birth, even in David's city and of David's stock, could not have

[1] For exposition of this whole question of Messianic Fulfillment, see Beecher, *Prophets and Promise*, chap. xvii.

availed to mark a man of faulty temper and insignificant personality as the promised Messiah. To be first born of the blood royal is enough to mark a man as Czar of all the Russias, even though he be of epileptic habit and feeble mind, but not so the anointed of God. Birth at Bethlehem and of the lineage of David could not constitute Jesus the Messiah, save as these were symbols of the Divine choice and anointing fulfilled in His commanding personal majesty and wisdom.

The merest outline of the author's experience is enough to indicate how he arrived at faith in the Messiahship of Jesus.[1] His first contact with Jesus was as one of a company, who heard Him speak, and saw Him work. He was drawn to Him by something out of the common in His words and works. He was drawn more and more powerfully to Him by an increasing apprehension of His wisdom and His power. The author of this Gospel was drawn even more by His wisdom than by His power. But it was His personal quality, His individuality as concretely manifested in His words and life, that led this man to believe in Him. The correspondence between the life of Jesus and the Old Testament was an afterthought, a part of his interpretation; but the primary fact, the original dynamic of his discipleship, was simply Jesus Himself. He did not come to Jesus through the prophecies; he came to the prophecies through Jesus. In attempting to commend Jesus to his countrymen, it was natural and inevitable that he should turn to prophecy, and it is also natural, that, while he drew the character of Jesus in such a way that they could see that He was one with the Majestic figure who fills the prophetic page, he should call attention to incidental resemblances in His life to familiar Messianic expectations. And he knew exactly

[1] Cf. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, (Eng. Tran.), vol. i, p. 133.

what he was doing, and why he did it. There can be no mistake in attributing to ancient writers a fair share of intelligence, and a reasonable amount of common information. (Perhaps wisdom may die with us, but it is too much to suppose that it was also born with us.) In the present instance, there is a reason to believe that the author is quite as intellectual and well balanced as many of his critics. I cannot believe, in view of the facts, that he was ignorant of the context and the primary meanings of the passages which he quotes from the Old Testament, or that he means to claim for many of the passages, which he introduces with the formula, "Then was fulfilled," or "that it might be fulfilled," anything more than any intelligent man would claim for interesting and helpful illustrations of his theme.

For example, is it conceivable that the author of the Gospel of Matthew was ignorant that the passage from Jeremiah concerning the weeping of Rachel had in it no real and definite predictive element; that in its first use it was a figure of speech and that in his application of it to Christ, it could have, as in Jeremiah's use, only a figurative and illustrative meaning?

This same illustrative use of Old Testament prophecies is clearly seen in the last passage of the section, of which we have made no previous mention,—the text applied to Jesus of Nazareth,—"He shall be called a Nazarene."[1] This is not a direct quotation from any known prophecy, and is obscure and difficult. The explanation which finds in the word translated Nazarene a vague connection with the "branch" prophecy of Isaiah, is probably as nearly correct as any. It is evidently meant for nothing more than a mere resemblance, really a play upon similarly sounding words used for purposes of illustration,

[1] Matt. ii, 23.

and yet it is introduced by the formula, "That it might be fulfilled."

Dr. Edersheim maintains that the Hebrew method of finding in prophecy anything that the words may be interpreted to mean, whether that meaning lies within the original intention of the prophet or not, is legitimate. It may be, but I see no evidence that the New Testament writers allowed themselves any such liberty.

They certainly had the right to use the Old Testament as a storehouse of illustrative material, but that they strained Old Testament passages to make them mean something they did not mean, in order to prove something which they were not intended to prove, is a statement which requires very clear evidence to support it, and that evidence is not forthcoming.

A close scrutiny of the Immanual passage which is brought into connection with the birth of Jesus will show how clear and true Matthew's idea of exegesis was. The original meaning of the message as spoken to Ahaz is clearly and beautifully expressed by George Adam Smith: "The general significance apart from the name Immanuel is that 'before a certain Child, whose birth is vaguely but solemnly intimated in the near future, shall have come to years of discretion, the results of the choice of Ahaz shall be manifest. Judah shall be devastated and her people have sunk to the most rudimentary means of living.'" [1]

Here most radical critics stop in the interpretation of the passage. But this leaves out of consideration the most distinctive word in the passage,—the name of this child Immanuel,—and we are compelled to agree with Dr. Smith, "that it is quite impossible to dissociate so solemn an announcement by Jehovah to the house of David of the birth of a Child, so highly named, from that

[1] Isa. vii, 15.

expectation of the coming of a Glorious Prince, which was current in this royal family since the days of its founder. Mysterious and abrupt as the intimations of Immanuel's birth may seem to us at this juncture, we cannot forget that it fell from Isaiah's lips upon hearts which cherished as their dearest hope the appearance of a glorious descendant of David, and were just now the more sensitive to this hope that both David's city and David's dynasty were in peril. Could Ahaz possibly understand by Immanuel any other child than that Prince whose coming was the inalienable hope of His house?

But if we are right in supposing that Ahaz made this identification or had even the dimmest presage of it, then we understand the full force of the sign.

Ahaz by his unbelief had not only disestablished himself (ver. 9), but he had mortgaged the hope of Israel. In the flood of disaster which his fatal resolution would bring upon the land it mattered little what was to happen to himself. Isaiah does not trouble now to mention any penalty for Ahaz. But his resolve's exceeding pregnancy of peril is brought home to the king by the assurance that it will devastate all the golden future and must disinherit the promised king. The Child who is Israel's hope is born; He receives the divine name, and that is all of salvation or glory suggested. He grows up, not to a throne or the majesty which the seventy-second Psalm pictures,—offerings of Sheba's and Sheba's kings, the corn of the land shaking like the fruit of Lebanon, while they of the city flourish like the grass of the earth,—but to the food of privation, to the sight of His country razed by His enemies into one vast common, fit only for pasture, to loneliness and suffering. Amid the general desolation His figure vanishes from our sight and only His name remains to haunt, with its infinite melancholy of what

might have been, the thorn-choked vineyards and grass-grown courts of Judah." [1]

In the light of sane and intelligent exegesis, Matthew's use of this passage with reference to Christ is justified.

As a matter of fact, the word of the prophet to Ahaz was a repetition of the promise made to Abraham, to Moses, and to David, with the solemn warning attached that by his willfulness and sin he may alienate the empire of the promised deliverer.[2]

We shall come to the question of the relationship of this passage to the virgin birth a little later, but in its general application to Christ, Matthew shows not only correct understanding of the passage, but deep insight into its application.

No intelligent understanding of the relationship between Old Testament prophecy and the life of Christ is possible without giving careful heed to the chief argument for His Messiahship, which underlies the entire New Testament—that is Christ's intellectual and moral greatness and His spiritual preëminence.

This, in a sense, is the only vital question. We need care only for this. Was Jesus the moral fulfillment of the ideal of the prophets? This question moves in a region above controversy about the minutiæ of exegesis —either in the Old Testament or the New, is untouched by critical theories and can be answered only by an appeal to the facts as exhibited in the life of Jesus. Upon their proof that Jesus was fit to be the Messiah New Testament writers fearlessly stake their credit. That they have been successful in their efforts to prove that Jesus is spiritually worthy to be the Messiah, is strikingly seen in the new phase upon which, in late years, the entire con-

[1] G. A. Smith, *Isaiah*, vol. i, pp. 115 ff.

[2] See Beecher, *Prophets and Promise*, p. 333.

troversy has entered. The question is no longer whether Jesus is great enough to be the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, but whether Messianic prophecy is great enough to claim Jesus as its fulfillment. The entire Messianic conception is condemned by some as an unworthy and inadequate representation of Jesus.

It is alleged that by comparison with the world-wide and even cosmic mission of Christ, as seen in the unfolding of Christian thought and life, the Messianic ideas of the Jewish nation sink into utter insignificance. It matters not whether the prophecies are fulfilled; they are not of sufficient importance to merit much attention. The most that can be granted is that the world-wide career of Jesus had its historic inception in the Messianic idea. This, however, was merely the temporary sheath, which was soon outgrown and abandoned by the expanding Kingdom of the Christ. The whole question, therefore, of the fulfillment of prophecy is settled by relegating it to a place among the unconsidered trifles, which may safely be disregarded by the student of Christ's life and teaching.

It seems to me that this notion is to be combated with all earnestness. It is an incorrect interpretation of the Old Testament; it is opposed to Jesus' own conception of His life and work; it leads to a dangerous underestimate of the importance of history. The Messianic ideal as popularly interpreted by many of the Jews of Jesus' time was narrow, provincial, political, and unworthy. Jesus met it with unflinching opposition and refused on every occasion to be bound by it. But this leaves untouched the fact that the Messianic hope, as uttered by the prophets themselves and as interpreted by Jesus, is of unmeasured historic importance and of perennial worth.

In it the spiritual longings of the whole world, often

unconscious, chiefly inarticulate, came to voice and utterance. The interpretation which it offers of history and of human life overleaps continually the boundaries of national exclusiveness, and demands for its satisfaction and fulfillment nothing less than a world-wide kingdom—a universal brotherhood of man.

The Ruler, who in outline and anticipation it describes and promises, is adequate to the kingdom which He is to establish. The Messiah of the prophets is none other and no less than the revealer of God, and the redeemer of men.

In order that we may see clearly the real significance of the Messianic hope of Israel, let us briefly pass in review the leading features of prophetism as it unfolds in the successive teachings of the Old Testament.[1]

In order to get some adequate conception of the meaning of this unique national hope it is scarcely needful to do more than to examine the very first utterance of the great promise to Abraham: "Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house ... and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."[2]

This passage and the parallel texts exhibit certain striking facts.

It contains a promise of posterity which shall be permanent and shall include a nation and a federation of nations in which all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. This promise had a religious value to Abraham because it brought him into relationship with the living

[1] See Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise*, Part II, pp. 175, *seq.*

[2] Gen. xii, 1-3. Cf. xviii, 18; xxii, 18; xxvi, 4; xxviii, 14.

God,[1] but the promise made to him passed beyond himself to his children, and beyond them to the "nations of the earth." The universalistic note was struck in the very first delivery of the message. This message was repeated several times in Genesis, and each time the emphasis upon the inclusion within the promise of all mankind form the climax of an ascending series of specifications. It is a promise that "Abraham and his seed shall be eternally Yahweh's own people for the benefit of the nations," and an intelligent man of patriarchal times would expect that the events included under it would still be in progress, whatever their nature, hundreds of years in the future.[2]

In the era of the Exodus the promise made to Abraham was still looked upon as operative, and the new covenant publicly entered into more than once is thought of as the perpetuation of the covenant with Abraham.

The people were to be the Lord's people, a priest-nation for the sake of all mankind.[3]

In David's time,[4] the same promise was repeated with the same emphasis upon the universality of the promise. David should have as his successors an endless line of kings, one of whom should build the temple, while throughout the whole succession should be fulfilled the promise made to Abraham. In the prophets after David, this faith had risen to a sublime doctrine that the Lord had made Israel His peculiar people; had vested this relation in the royal line of David; and had done this for the purpose of blessing mankind. The promises had been unfolding for

[1] See G. A. Smith, *Hist. Geog. Holy Land*, p. 33.

[2] Beecher, *Prophets and Promise;* Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 195.

[3] Ex. vi, 7; xxix, 45; xix, 5, 6; Lev. xi, 45; Deut. xxviii, 9–11; vii, 6; xiv, 2.

[4] 2 Sam. vii, *passim*. Cf. with Deut. xii, 11; iv, 7, 8; Gen. xvii, 7, 8; Deut. xxvi, 17, 18. Cf. especially, 2 Sam. vii, 17, 19 (original), with Gen. xii, 1–3.

centuries and were on their way to still larger fulfillment in the future.

Now, in this whole prophetic conception there are a number of great and illuminating ideas. Israel is the nation of promise; the promise is eternal and irrevocable; the nations of the earth have an interest in its fulfillment. An eternally operative promise involves cumulative fulfillment, with culminating periods of fulfillment.[1] In every age, it meant a special manifestation of God's grace connected with the past, operative in the present, and leading out into the illimitable future. This promise was always connected with sin and redemption; it held true to righteousness and brotherhood as its ruling principle and ultimate ideal; it was always connected with some burning moral question of immediate and pressing importance.[2] Throughout also, the living representation of the house of David was made trustee and guardian of the promise.

In this connection, is it pertinent to ask what single item in the noblest and broadest modern interpretation of the Kingdom of Heaven is lacking from Old Testament prophetism? The contribution which Christianity made to the ancient conception of the Kingdom of God was not so much in furnishing new ideals as in setting the Old Testament teaching free from narrow and partial interpretations, and particularly in furnishing the dynamic for carrying it into action. And this leads directly to a second remarkable feature of Old Testament prophetism—what may be called the instrument for the realization of the promise. The prophets consistently taught that the promise which had such connection with the sacred part, such bearing upon the duties of the immediate present, and such infinite

[1] Beecher, *Prophets and Promise*, p. 376.
[2] Cf. Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 242.

meaning for the future, should be realized through the influence of *consecrated personality*.

It was, first of all, Israel, the "seed" of Abraham,[1] the priest-nation of the world—then David and his descendants as the representative of the best life of Israel who manifest the Lord to mankind and bring about the fulfillment of the promise. The bearing of this promise in urging both upon king and people faithfulness to Jehovah has been noted already in the Immanuel passage. Then under various titles and with various descriptive details there appears the figure of One, of the people and yet greater than the nation; of the Davidic line, yet greater than David, human and yet bearing Divine attributes, who is to be the trustee of the promise, its consummate embodiment, and the adequate instrument of its fulfillment.

A catalogue of His titles will show what a wonderful conception it was that filled the minds of the later prophets.

The familiar word Messiah is used a few times, chiefly to "denote David, or the reigning king of his line, thought of as especially the depository of the great promise."[2]

The most striking and significant title in connection with the New Testament is Servant of Jehovah applied to Israel and to the line of David, "thought of, not merely in themselves, but as the promise people and the promise dynasty." This expressive and significant word conditions the great passage in Isaiah lii and liii,—the suffering Servant of the Lord.

The expression, "the Son,"[3] is used of Israel or the existing representative of the house of David, thought of as a son to Jehovah.

[1] Gen. xii, 1–3; Ex. vi, vii, *et al.*; 2 Sam. vii, *pass.*

[2] Dr. Beecher.

[3] 1 Chron. xxii, 10; Psa. ii, 7–12, lxxxix, 26; Hos. xi, 1; Isa. ix, 6.

This great personality is called the Chosen or Elect One,[1] representing the choice of God as the bearer of blessing to the world.

He is also called Hasidh,[2] the "permanent depository of Gods's loving kindness."

He is also called "branch"[3] and "flower,"[4] terms which express His connection with the race and His usefulness and beauty.

Now in this hurried and inadequate outline of Old Testament prophetism, two great ruling ideas of vast import and far-reaching significance appear.

1. A world Kingdom of God based upon righteousness issuing in universal peace. The song of the angels in Luke might be taken as a summary of the unfolding prophetic conception.

2. The realization of that kingdom through consecrated personality—a holy people and a holy king.

The unique distinction of the New Testament men and their claim to permanent honor in the moral annals of man was their identification of the teaching of Christ with the teaching of the prophets and the personality of Christ with the fulfillment of the prophetic promise.

That they chose just the perpetual spiritual elements of the promises as constituting the essence of the prophetic idea, and were bold enough to identify the humble Jesus of Nazareth with the august figure who should reveal God to men and usher in the kingdom of righteousness, argues for them a grasp of the meaning of the Old Testament and the significance of the person of Christ for men, which goes far to account for their influence over the world since.

[1] Psa. lxxxix, 3; Isa. xlii, 1; xliii, 20; xlv, 4.

[2] Micah vii, 2; Psa. xii, 1; xxxii, 6; xviii, 25; iv, 3, 4; lxxxvi, 2.

[3] II. Sam. xxiii, 8; Isa. iv, 2–6; Jer. xxiii, 5–8; xxxiii, 14–18; Zech. iii, 8.

[4] Isa. xi, 1–10.

Account for it as you may, the apostolic identification of Jesus with the promised Messiah is one of the most remarkable incidents in the history of the human mind.

This identification, however, reveals the perpetual value of the Messianic ideal[1] as well as the historic importance of Jesus.[2] The promise is of God, so also the fulfillment; both together constitute a true philosophy of history in relationship both to the past and to the future.

That this is the correct interpretation of the Messianic hope, the attitude of Jesus toward it is adequate and convincing evidence. That the teachings of the prophets had a profound and even controlling influence upon Him, there can be no question. That He looked upon the promise of the prophets as God's promise and upon His life as the fulfillment of it, cannot be successfully denied. He accepted the Messianic idea for Himself, not merely as a garment to be worn until He was established on His way and then to be flung aside as outworn and useless, but as the permanent and adequate form of His historic self-revelation. He conformed His life to the teaching of the prophets, not often in the sense of performing acts incidentally fulfilling ancient oracles, but by accepting that inward spirit of concentration to the will of God and the need of man, which was the soul of the prophetic ideal.

The difference between Jesus and the Jews with whom He came into conflict was that He despised the Messianic idea which they adored, but that to Him that idea meant purity and devotion, labor and sacrifice and suffering, willingly endured and patiently borne; while to most of them it meant political power, earthly exaltation, and a spectacular career of conquest and glory. The difference was irreconcilable, but the Jews and not Jesus were false

[1] See Bruce, *Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, pp. 252–254.

[2] Cf. Clarke, *The Use of the Scriptures in Theology*, p. 129.

to the real Messianic idea. As He looked out upon His career as the Messiah, He saw clearly the crown of thorns, the cross and the tomb, and though He was able to stay His soul with the thought of the joy that was set before Him, His acceptance of it was none the less an act of supreme consecration to an ordeal, dreadful to contemplate, of sacrifice and loss.

This minimizing of the importance of the Messianic framework of the Gospel is connected also with a dangerous underestimate of the value of history. The full flower of the tendency may be seen in utterances like the following, from James Martineau.

In speaking of the disappearance from radical theology of certain conceptions formerly held, he instances[1] "the entire Messianic theology," and goes on to say: "As objective reality, as a faithful representation of our invisible and ideal universe, it is gone from us, gone therefore from our interior religion, and become an outside mythology.

"From the person of Jesus, for instance, everything official attached to Him by evangelists or divines, has fallen away; when they put such false robes on Him, they were but leading Him to death. The pomp of royal lineage and fulfilled prediction, the prerogative of King, of Priest, of Judge, the advent with retinue of angels on the clouds of heaven are to us mere deforming investitures, misplaced, like court dresses on the spirits of the just, and He is simply the Divine Flower of Humanity blossoming after ages of spiritual growth—the realized possibility of life in God.

"All that has been added to that real historic scene, the angels that hang around His birth and the fiend that tempts His youth; the dignities that await His future; the throne, the trumpet, the assize, the bar of judgment; with

[1] *Loss and Gain in Recent Theology*, pp. 14 ff.

all the splendors and terrors that ensue, Hades and the Crystal Sea, Paradise and the Infernal Gulf, nay, the very boundary walls of the Kosmic panorama that contain these things have for us utterly melted away and left us amid the infinite space and the silent stars."[1]

Stripping the alluring rhetoric from this utterance and making a careful analysis of the things that with one stroke *currente calamo* he removes from the boards, it will be seen to involve the rejection of practically the entire historic form of Christ's self-revelation and the interpretation of it by the disciples. Martineau's lifelong rejection of the Messianic theology must be regarded as the vagary of a great mind whose understanding of Christ was philosophic rather than historical.[2] The ornate sentences quoted above involve an evident fallacy, for those who have given us the portrait of the "Divine Flower" of humanity are the same ones who have robed Him in the "deforming investitures," and it is very difficult to understand how men could at one and the same time have eyes to see and skill to portray the "Divine Flower" yet be unenlightened enough to put false robes upon Him, to dim His beauty with meretricious decorations, to enswathe Him in deforming investitures, especially as these very terms which are intended most clearly to manifest and maintain His Divineness are, according to this teaching, "the deforming investitures."

[1] Strauss has given expression to the same general tendency. He has said: "What matters it to us what passed in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago? How does it concern us that Jesus was born in such or such a village, that He had such or such ancestors, that He suffered on such or such a day of the Holy Week." (*Leben Jesu In.*)

This transcendence of history is fatal in the long run to reality in faith or life. What Christ is ideally is dependent upon what He was actually. The only interpretation of Christ which accounts for His historic influence is that given in the Gospel.

[2] Cf. Bruce, *Apologetics*, pp. 53 ff.

And the ages of spiritual growth, out of which the Divine Flower blossomed, are literally interpreted—the training of the chosen people by the prophets into the meaning and power of the Messianic hope.

And the Jesus thus stripped of all the symbolism of authority and power and cut off from history is a dream, not a reality. The attempts to find a Gospel behind the Gospel have conspicuously failed. Criticism has increasingly shown that the primary Gospel, the alleged group of facts behind the evangelic record, which we now possess, is the same Gospel in all essential particulars.

That simple unmiraculous Galilæan vision of the gentle teacher, without self-assertion and without wonders, never existed, nor if it had existed would it have been of any value to us. The form of the record is a part of its essence. The reality of the Christ is bound with the reality of His life as portrayed in the Gospel. The transcendental idealism that attempts to construe Jesus apart from His real life on the earth as found in the historical records is bound to blunder.[1]

The utterance quoted above could not have emanated from a man with any strong grasp of the meaning and sacredness of history. This explains the anomaly of Martineau's devoutness toward Christ and his radical and ruthless criticism of the documents in which Christ's life is enshrined. Christ to him was an inward vision interpreted in the light of philosophy rather than of history. The Christ whom he pictures is such a one as our age has often dreamed of, but such as no age ever actually saw, morally magnetic, spiritually ideal, but working no miracle and lacking in all the symbolism of power and dignity.

[1] For a good statement of the essentially miraculous Gospel, see Fairbairn, *Phil. Christ. Rel.* pp. 323 *seq.* Cf Bruce, *ibid.*, p. 101.

But in order to be real, Christ must be historically placed. In order to be known He must live, be recorded and portrayed. He must be born at a certain time and at a certain place, under certain definite circumstances, into family and natural and historic relationships; He must establish Himself in society; relate Himself to the religious life of man; fulfill expectations and make Himself believed and gain followers. And having thus established Himself, He must be made known to the world in records which shall constitute testimony to His person, and thus manifested, the historic facts of His life are of interest and of permanent value in the interpretation of His character and meaning for the world. To cut loose from history is to fly off into the spaces. It is a separation from reality. This constitutes the value of the Messianic conception. It is a historic fact that Jesus Himself and His followers believed that He was the Messiah. This granted, as it certainly must be, the rest follows, for no historic fact can be shuffled off like an old coat, once good but now outworn. That a thing so happened is evidence enough that it is a part of God's plan, that it is sacred and of permanent value. I do not believe that Jesus would accept honor paid to Himself at the cost of discredit placed upon the noble and worthy idea that had such mighty influence in molding His own consciousness and life, and brought into His new movement for humanity the momentum of that conception of God and man and their union in a kingdom of grace and love, which had required ages for its ripening, and to the fulfillment of which He gave His life a willing offering. He who abandons the Messianic theology[1] has cut him-

[1] Mathews in *Messianic Hope in the New Testament* has opened anew the question of the permanent value of the Messianic conception, but after carefully reading the book I see nothing to modify in the above statement.

self off from historic reality and is indeed left amid the "infinite space and the silent stars" and alone, for the Jesus of history and of Christian experience is not there.

It now remains to gather up the reasonings of this chapter and to indicate certain conclusions toward which we have been tending.

The prophecies did not create the incidents with which they are connected. We have found abundant reason in each case to justify a peremptory dismissal of the hypothesis that the incidents arose by legendary creation due to the influence of the Old Testament texts upon the imagination of the disciples.

In addition to all the reasons which have been already adduced to establish this conclusion, there is another, which would seem to be sufficient in itself. There was no unanimity in the Messianic expectation of the Jews contemporary with Christ.[1] Some looked for a man; some for a Divine being; some for a succession of men; some for a kingdom without any single personality at the head of it. There was no such consensus upon any one Messianic text, nor any connected series of texts as would lead to the creation of incidents to fulfill them. The hope was particularly vivid; the details of the way in which the hope was to be fulfilled was blurred, vague, and contradictory.

As was to be expected, therefore, the texts seem rather to be illustrations and side lights used to outline and illuminate a profound and philosophic conception of the

[1] See statements and references in Mathew's *Messianic Hope in the New Testament*, pp. 3, 44, 45, 54, and index under "Messianism;" see also Stanton in *H. D. B.* article, "Messiah," vol. ii, p. 354; and Schürer, *Jewish People in Time of Christ*, index under "Messianic Hope," vol. ii, ch. ii, pp. 126-187; Edersheim, *L. J. M.* bk. ii, ch. v; Beecher, *Prophets and Promise*, pp. 366-375.

unity of the life of Jesus with past history, and especially the promise of God through the prophets.

This conception of the evangelists lends no little credibility to all statements of fact which they may choose to make.

It is unlikely that men, who had such a firm grasp upon the philosophy of history as is indicated by the fact that they alone of their contemporaries understood the meaning of prophecy and of the person and work of Jesus, and exhibited the unity of these two with such clearness and power as to convince the vast majority of competent minds not only that Jesus was the Messiah, but that the Messiah was the Revealer of God and the Saviour of men, would have a weak sense of the sacredness of fact, or show themselves lacking in the genuine historic spirit.[1]

In other words, I find it impossible to believe that the followers of One who taught with unexampled emphasis the sacred obligation of truth, who portrayed with such simple truth and moral majesty the ideal life—"the flower of humanity"—would weave into the fabric of the story, which to them, was of all things in life the most important, floating legends and old wives' fables, for which there was and could be no reasonable ground of assurance.

The connection between prophecy and fulfillment in the life of Jesus, as seen on the large scale in His realization of the Messianic ideal, and deliniated with such power, especially by the writer of Matthew's Gospel, is one of our reasons for attributing to him the genuine historic spirit.

Based upon this fact, my conviction that Matthew was a genuine historian is so strong that even if I should find reason to doubt the correctness of his exegesis according

[1] Cf. Beecher, *Prophets and the Promise*, p. 380 (extract quoted from article in *Am. Journal of Theol.*).

to modern methods, I should still be driven to hold that he had some good reason for his interpretations.

It seems to me that there must have been some harmony between the life of Jesus and current Messianic expectations, irrespective of exegesis. Attention has often enough been called to the divergence between the career of Jesus and the Messianic expectations of the day—was there not likely to be some harmony as well as great divergence?

It is not a question whether the exegesis of Matthew is justifiable according to the methods of the modern class-room, but whether some of the current expectations of the Jews were not literally met and fulfilled in Jesus.

I refer especially to such beliefs as that Christ should be born of the family of David and at the town of Bethlehem.

To me it seems a clear case of simple necessity that so far as they did not derogate from His true dignity as Messiah and did not tend to deflect Him from the true path of His mission, He should meet and answer some specific hopes and convictions of His contemporaries. It would seem to be essential that there should be before, at, and after, His birth providential indications of His importance, that His life might be guarded with especial care and His personality watched with expectant interest. Otherwise, why should there have been any prophecy at all? It would seem necessary that there should be some meeting ground between Him and His own age, and where could this meeting ground be except in their ideas of how the Messiah should come and what He should be? He had to disappoint them in many things, would it be likely that He would be forced to disappoint them in all things? If they expected Him to be born of the family and in the City

of David, in line, that is, with their fondest memories and of their most sacred hopes, why should He not be thus born?[1]

The only answer to be made to this would be a contention that Jesus could not be born at Bethlehem and of David's line and still be the Messiah and Saviour, which is, of course, an absurdity. We have found, therefore, I feel, a rational interpretation of Matthew's use of prophecy, which does not require any wresting of the texts and is in harmony with his otherwise strongly established reputation for historic carefulness.

There is evidence in the life of Jesus that where there was no moral principle involved, He sometimes deliberately conformed to popularly understood Messianic requirements in order to aid recognition and acceptance of Him. The possibility of harmony between popular expectation and the deeper meaning of prophecy is strikingly seen in the incident which occurred on Palm Sunday. In the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus deliberately performed a Messianic act in accordance with popular ideas. It was a claim of Messiahship put into pictorial form. He entered Jerusalem as her King, at the same time that, in accordance with Rabbinical tradition, He proclaimed Israel's apostasy.

But it has a deeper meaning than this.[2] Superficially considered, it was simply a concession to their methods of interpretation. But the passage had become symbolic: The ass was the universal type of peace, and in riding upon the animal's back He adopted the symbolism to Himself as the Prince of Peace. It was a parable in act instead of in word, which at once met a present purpose of the time,

[1] Cf. Beecher, *Prophets and Promise*, p. 370.
[2] Cf. Edersheim, *L. J. M.*, vol. ii, p. 370.

and touched upon the very deepest meanings of the prophetic idea.[1]

It must also be said that precisely in the most vital points Matthew's exegesis will bear any legitimate test which may be applied to it. The Davidic origin of the Messiah is based, not upon uncertain interpretations of isolated texts, but upon the entire body of prophecy after David's time, having not only a literal but also a spiritual meaning and a legitimate and inescapable predictive force.

The birth at Bethlehem was incidental rather than vital, but is evidently a legitimate detail under the Promise.

The birth from a virgin was connected with a legitimately Messianic passage and is also the culmination of a long series of repetitions of the promise connected with the birth of especially important historic persons.

The fulfillment of a comprehensive historic promise as a whole lends all needful credibility to the details which accompanied that fulfillment. The Infancy narratives supply the links of connection between the promise and its fulfillment.

In them we see the ancient hope illumined by the bright light of its fulfillment. In them, therefore, we are on firm ground both of exegesis and history.[2]

[1] It may be worth while to call attention to the fact that while Jesus deliberately adopted this popular expectation as an object lesson or parable in act emphasizing at once His Messiahship and the nation's sin, there is no evidence that the point of the incident reached their understanding at all. The pilgrims cried, Hosanna! The nation stood aloof in sullen perplexity and cold dislike or in ill-repressed fury. It shows that there was no such widespread eagerness and aptitude in the application of Messianic texts to Jesus as has sometimes been claimed.

[2] The most original and valuable recent discussion of Messianic prophecy is Willis Judson Beecher's *Prophets and the Promise* (T. Y. Crowell & Co., 1905).

CHAPTER III

THE THEORY OF LATE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN INTERPOLATION—KEIM

In order to justify the rejection of the Gospel story of the birth of Jesus, it seems necessary to cut it off from the main body of the evangelic tradition. By denying apostolic origin and consequently apostolic authority to those statements concerning the mode of His entrance into the world, found in our Gospels, much is done to discredit them as the legitimate basis of faith.

The task, however, is not an easy one, for, at the very outset, the weight of textual authority is in favor of the section.

The story of the Infancy is a part of the record. It has been a part of the record from the beginning so far as we have any evidence. The first two chapters of Matthew belong to present Greek Gospel; they are found in every unmutilated Greek manuscript; they are testified to by the earliest church fathers; and according to Epiphanius, belonged to the Hebrew copy of the Gospel in the possession of the Nazarene sect.[1]

The Infancy section throughout has an equally good textual foundation. Against this, Keim alleges, first, a solution in continuity between the genealogy at the beginning of the first chapter and the Infancy narrative, and again between the latter and the account of the baptism in the third chapter.

[1] See full discussion in Stanton, *Gospels as Historical Documents*, pp. 257, *seq.*

Second, inconsistency in certain statements in the Infancy section with statements in the section following.[1]

Third, the omission of the section by the Gospel of the Ebionites.

Of these arguments, we may settle the third one first and very summarily. The omission of the Infancy section from the Ebionite Gospel was not only natural, but inevitable. The statements therein contained of Jesus' birth impinged with destructive effect upon all Ebionite interpretations of Jesus' life, and could not be allowed to stand by the adherents of that view. That the Ebionites did cut out the section adds as much as any one thing could to our assurance that the story of the birth belonged to the orthodox tradition.[2]

The argument, from alleged inconsistencies in statement between the section and that which follows, is also far from conclusive. In the first chapter, eighteenth and twentieth verses, it is stated that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost. In the third chapter, sixteenth verse, it is stated that the heavens were opened, and that the Spirit of God descended upon Him in form as a dove. (See note A at end of Chapter.)

These statements are inconsistent only in the mind of one who interprets the latter statement as meaning that then, for the first time, the Spirit was granted to Jesus. But there is no reason why they should be thus interpreted. That the Spirit of God was especially manifested to Jesus at the crisis of His baptism one need not question; that He was bestowed then, for the first time, is to be very seriously doubted. That the Spirit of God had nothing to do with Jesus until He was a mature man, ready for

[1] Keim, vol. i, p. 83.

[2] For evidence that the Infancy narrative was in the Gospel according to the Hebrews see Stanton: *Gospels as Historical Documents*, p. 297.

His life work, is untenable. As a matter of fact, the passage in the Infancy section and the one concerning the baptism are parts of one consistent representation that the Spirit of God was present throughout the entire career of Jesus.

We, then, are left to face the question as to the alleged solution of continuity between the Infancy section and the adjacent parts of the narrative.

Keim's statement of the case is as follows:—

"There is for example no sort of connection between the history of the childhood of Jesus and that of His baptism; the latter is tacked on to the former in a strikingly loose and inexact manner, as if the childhood of Jesus and John's baptizing were contemporary; and to the baptism of Jesus is ascribed the inspiration from God, which the narrative of the childhood expressly refers to His birth.[1]

"This shows that the Gospel began with the genealogy of Jesus (chap. i), and John's baptizing (chap. iii), and that the interpolator fitted in, as well as he could, the narrative of the childhood."[2]

Now, is there any such break in continuity as this statement alleges?

The blunder of making the baptizing of John and the infancy of Jesus contemporaneous is so colossal as to suggest a doubt that even an interpolator could have perpetrated it.

Is it not pertinent to suggest that the significance of the last verse of the second chapter, to which the words "in those days" refer has been overlooked? Whoever wrote that passage must have known that there was an interval between the arrival of the family at Nazareth, when Jesus was a baby, and the appearance of Jesus among the

[1] Keim, vol. i, p. 82. [2] Page 83.

disciples of John at Jordan, when He was a man grown. He does not wish to tell the story of those years in detail. He, therefore (in the manner of Matthew), summarizes the entire period of residence in Nazareth as a fulfillment of prophecy. His mind is evidently dwelling upon the period as completed in His public manifestation, when He became talked about and known as the Nazarene. In the fourth chapter a statement is made which is meaningless, except with reference to the last verse of the second chapter.[1]

If the Infancy section is an interpolation, it is most skillfully done; in other words, there is nothing in the passage to compel us to the belief that it has been thrust in where it does not belong. Let us look a little more closely at this alleged interpolator,—who was he and when did he work?[2]

Keim thus states his theory: "The impression is overwhelming that a grand unity underlies this Gospel, and that a moderate share of small, but essentially related additions, belongs to the Jewish-Christian interpolator, who lived after the destruction of Jerusalem, more or less contemporary with Luke or Mark, and who wrote in the spirit of a freer Christianity."[3]

The work of the interpolator is marked in general by quotations from the Hebrew Old Testament "introduced by impressive stereotyped phrases, closely resembling each other, but not occurring either in the case of the sayings of Jesus, or the reflection of the first writer."[4]

As related to the section especially under review, the statement of Keim is this:—

"With the exception of the single passage as to the birth by a virgin, where, as often in other parts of the book, the Greek version was quite indispensable, the use of the

[1] Ch. iv, 13. [2] Page 85. [3] Page 84. [4] Page 82.

Hebrew Old Testament prevails throughout the whole of the preliminary history, as can be demonstrated in four particulars; and these very particulars, the birth by the virgin, intimations of which are introduced also into the genealogy, the birth at Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt, with the return thence, and the slaughter of the children at Bethlehem, all so much more evidently the property of this collector of prophecies, as they find little or no confirmation elsewhere in the Gospel history."

The quotations thus far made apply chiefly to the first Gospel. Keim seems to have no definite theory as to the connection of the Infancy stories with the Gospel of Luke, but in another place he very definitely pronounces upon the date of the entire Infancy section in both Gospels.[1]

"The age of these tales cannot be put far back in the first Gospel; they can hardly be counted as part of the groundwork of the book, which more likely, with Mark, began with the baptism of John, and on that account alone fall below A. D. 70. In the third Gospel, whose rise lies far enough on this side of the destruction of Jerusalem (A. D. 80–90), the Jewish-Christian portions, even of the introductory narrative, in spirit, matter, and form show the coloring of a later time than that of Matthew himself.

"We may safely call these accounts post-apostolic, and above all post-Pauline; the latter, if only for this reason, that Paul and the rest of the New Testament have as yet no inkling of a miraculous birth of Jesus; which indeed finds no strong support until after the middle of the second century, in the pages of Justin, in the epistle of Ignatius, and in the Gospel of James."[2]

According, then, to the additions in Matthew, and according to Luke, Mary is betrothed to Joseph, and is blessed with offspring before any contact with him.

[1] Vol. ii, p. 45. [2] Page 46.

Matthew, with chaste reserve, says, "She was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

Luke, following his source of information, draws a more sensuous picture of the heavenly mystery: "the Holy Ghost descended upon her in the form of a cloud, in which the hidden God comes near to mortal men, the fruit of this divine proximity is the child she bears beneath her bosom."

The way in which the story grew up is also clearly described.

"The longing was early excited,—a longing which found the fullest satisfaction in the Apochryphal Gospels, —for exacter information as to the birth and childhood of Jesus, and thereby at the same time to obtain an explanation of His miraculous life. Hence arose out of the Old Testament the belief that He was born of a pure virgin, the belief in the adoration of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, and the recall thence,—stories which pointed out the way of Christianity to the Gentiles."

We now have before us, in his own words and at considerable length, Keim's account of the origin of the Infancy narrative. What is to be said concerning it?

My first remark upon this explanatory theory is that, just as it stands, without calling into question one item in the manifold tissue of assertions by which it is maintained, it is open to serious, and, as it seems to me, fatal objection.

The theory places the accounts too early. Granting that the additions to Matthew, of which the Infancy narrative forms a part, and the account in Luke, were composed some time in the second decade before the close of the century, that date is still too early for the successful maintenance of the mythical hypothesis.[1]

[1] Strauss admits that the mythical hypothesis demands a very late date for the documents. See Bruce, *Mir. El. Gospels*, p. 90.

In order to do this, one must push the account to a date when the Christians were beyond the reach of authoritative information. The requirement is not fulfilled by the date in question. At that time, beyond a doubt, the apostle John was living, an eye-witness of Jesus, a vigilant guardian of the evangelic tradition. If Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth, I fail to see how any story that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin Mary at Bethlehem could possibly have arisen, taken literary form, and obtained general credence enough to become a part of the accepted Gospel, without its coming to the knowledge of John. Coming to his knowledge, it would have met with vigorous and effective protest that would have insured its destruction as an accepted Christian tenet. It is perfectly safe to affirm that no important statement concerning the life of Christ could have survived the contradiction of John at any time during his life.[1]

A plain statement of facts will make clear the utter untenableness of the theory as it stands.

Keim affirms with emphasis that the origin of the Infancy stories was Jewish-Christian. In speaking of the Gospel of Matthew as a whole, he says: "The interval has been too brief to sweep away an historical life altogether, the Jewish and Christian circles were too staid and too well taught to substitute dreams for facts, the Eastern memory was too tenacious, and eye-witnesses of the life of Jesus still lived."[2]

With the change that, while most of the eye-witnesses of the life of Jesus were gone, John still lived, and with him

[1] We may strengthen this by saying that no new interpretation of the Gospel which contradicted John's definite teaching could have gained credence for a long time after his death.

[2] Page 74.

many of those who were disciples of the eye-witnesses (as Luke affirms in his preface) were living, this statement holds true of the time when the fabrication of the narratives of the birth is alleged to have taken place. It is a particularly clear account of the characteristics of the group in which they are said to have arisen. And we may add the important fact, which seems to be persistently overlooked by many writers on early Christian history, that there was in existence an organized church, jealous of the integrity of its doctrine, and scrupulously careful in maintaining without change the testimony of the apostles.

Now among people of this conservative character, belonging to an organization like the early church, is said to have arisen, through a fusion of historical curiosity and doctrinal activity, the story of the virgin birth and the rest of the Infancy narrative.

Underneath that explanation lies the delusion, which has obtained an unaccountable hold upon many minds dealing with this subject, that at any time a Christian church could have developed *in vacuo* the idea of the virgin birth as an explanation of Christ's divinity. The doctrinal implication is not obvious enough. It cannot be placed with a theory like the preëxistence which is a doctrinal conception, verifiable only in the light of reason, because it lies wholly in the historical sphere, is doctrinal only secondarily and by inference, and could be verified or disproved by personal testimony. It was not an abstract conception, but a statement involving the experience of a family, members of which had been well known in the church, and who, either in person or by representative, were entitled to be heard in matters which concerned their own private history.

By hypothesis, the stories go back to a longing early felt for exacter information as to the birth and childhood of Jesus. But if there was in existence any person who

could offer information, having any claim to authority, would people "too staid and well taught to substitute dreams for facts" be likely to sit calmly down and unfold from inner consciousness such fables as the virgin birth, and the rest of the Infancy story? Along with this fallacy is another which vitiates much of Keim's reasoning on this subject,—a failure to discriminate between the canonical and noncanonical writings of the Infancy. He consistently treats the two sets of documents as if they stood upon the same level.[1] He, of course, considers them about equally authoritative, but aside from the question of authority, in other ways the documents are different.[2]

Keim says: "The longing was early excited,—a longing which found the fullest satisfaction in the Apocryphal Gospels, for exacter information as to the birth and childhood of Jesus."

Again he says: "For as this story, following in the steps of our older Gospels, is fond of going back to the Old Testament," etc.

This indifferent and indiscriminate treatment of records entirely different in genesis and character must lead to erroneous conclusions. In the passage before us the Gospel story and the Apocryphal legends are attributed to the same origin,—the curiosity of Christians as to the early life of Jesus. But if curiosity on the part of Christians can account for the contents of the canonical Infancy narrative, it cannot account for the omissions from it, and the omissions are just as significant as the contents. When has it ever happened that unregulated curiosity could be

[1] See, however, a notable exception, Keim, vol. ii, p. 137.

[2] For a statement of the world-wide difference in motive and viewpoint, see Neander, *History of Dogma* (Bohn's Trans.), vol. i, p. 193; also on character of Gospel narratives, see Stapfer, *Jesus Christ before Ministry*, Preface; also for clear and succinct account, see Bernard, *Lit. of Second Century*, lect. iii, pp. 99-124.

satisfied with the meager details of a brief and fragmentary account like that of the Infancy section? There is but a scanty group of brief and simple statements of fact, not enough to satisfy the curiosity of a devout and intelligent believer of to-day. The affirmation that the account is the work of those who were so eager to know how Christ came into the world and lived in the days of His youth that they created a fictitious story to satisfy the longing is to me utterly unbelievable. I can well believe that it is the literary creation of devout interest in the early life of Jesus working upon the scanty materials of authoritative information that were within reach. That it was the work of curiosity beyond the reach of facts, and cut loose from the limitations of truth, I cannot accept. This process would have gone much further. Such a process we have in the Apocryphal stories, which are indubitably the work of those who, although perhaps no more curious about the life of Jesus than the earlier generations of believers, were beyond reach of authoritative knowledge, except what had already been given in the Gospel narrative. They were, moreover, less scrupulous concerning the obligation of strict and absolute truthfulness.

This is certainly a reasonable explanation of the striking difference between the two sets of documents concerning the Infancy, differences which Keim's theory overlooks altogether, or at least incorrectly minimizes.

Still granting that the date is approximately correct, Keim's theory as to the way in which the Infancy narrative came into the text of Matthew's Gospel is open to objection.

Keim maintains that the entire section concerning the infancy of Jesus is the work of a Jewish-Christian interpolator, who is the author of a series of essentially related additions to the Gospel, marked by a special formula of

introduction, by use in quotation of the Hebrew texts, and by a liberalizing tendency of thought.

I remark, to begin with, that on general principles it is very precarious to attribute parts of a book having a "grand underlying unity" to a different author on the ground of such slight differences in the phrasing of introductory formulas as between "it is written in order that it might be fulfilled," and "this is He spoken of by Isaiah the prophet," and "this took place in order that it might be fulfilled which was written by the prophet," etc.

The formulas are generically alike, and are simply variations in the expression of one idea, which a writer, desirous of giving literary finish to his work, would be very apt to use.

It is hardly safer to divide the document on the ground of quotations from the Septuagint or the Hebrew Bible. In the critical discussions of the unity of Matthew, it seems to be taken for granted that the variation in the method of quotation is due either to the work of different writers or to mere chance.

Is it not at least conceivable that it is due to intelligent and deliberate choice on the part of one writer familiar with both texts, and using either according to his judgment of its value for the purpose in hand?

It would seem also that the theory vastly overworks the possibility of interpolation. Keim speaks of the interpolations as small; but the entire Infancy section, to say nothing of the other passages attributed to the interpolator, can hardly be called small, at least in importance.

We may reasonably believe in the presence of a certain limited amount of interpolated material in the Gospels. In the days of copying, notes and comments had a way of creeping from the margin into the texts. It may have

been that in the body of the narrative an unauthorized incident may now and then have been added.

But this hypothesis calls for the wholesale fabrication of an entire section of the history, in which the actual facts are completely subverted. How could such a thing have happened?[1] We know from references in the New Testament how any meddling with the teaching of the apostles was looked upon.[2] We know also that writings purporting to be of apostolic origin were scrutinized with the utmost care. We know that books, the authorship of which was in doubt, were looked upon with suspicion, and kept outside the canon until the church was convinced that they were of apostolic origin. We know that while some books ultimately accepted as canonical were at first looked upon with suspicion, and some which were at first quoted as authoritative were finally rejected, as a whole the process of sifting was careful and satisfactory, and a broad line of difference marks off the canonical from the noncanonical books.[3]

This process implies such careful scrutiny of the materials contained in the sacred tradition that I fail to see room for the unauthorized entrance into the text of so large an amount of material, containing such important additions to the record.[4]

The careful guardianship exercised by the early church over the sacred apostolic tradition forbids such a sup-

[1] It would have been more difficult to interpolate new material into the early life of Jesus because of the absence of detail. The novelty would be much more conspicuous. Cf. Stanton, *Gospels as Historical Documents*, p. 257.

[2] Gal. i, 8; Rev. xxii, 18.

[3] The sacredness of apostolic documents is seen in the absence of attempts to harmonize by changing texts—*e.g.*, Tatian; cf. Salmon, *In. to N. T.*, p. 126.

[4] On the question of interpolations see Moffat, *Hist. N. T.*, Appendix.

position. There are other considerations still more definite and specific to be urged against the theory.

The alleged interpolator described by the critic is a strange and fantastic figure, in whose objective reality it is very hard to believe. He is a Jewish-Christian, living after the fall of Jerusalem, who quotes from the Hebrew Bible in the interests of a more liberal Christianity.

He must be marked, of course, as a Jewish-Christian by his use of the Hebrew Bible, and as a liberalizing writer by the tendency of the passages which he quotes, and the uses he make of them.

A Jewish-Christian, contemporary with Luke, so zealous for a liberal interpretation of Christianity as to attempt laboriously to modify the Gospel of Matthew in that interest, could hardly have remained unknown to Luke. Their common interests would inevitably have drawn them together, as Luke and Paul were drawn together. Such a man could hardly have carried out a revision of Matthew's Gospel without Luke's being a party to it and responsible for it. Moreover, in the time of Luke, the reconstruction of Matthew's Gospel would have been a work of supererogation. His Gospel must certainly have been in course of construction, and would have served the end desired more perfectly than a twisted Gospel of Matthew.

The distinctive mark of the interpolator is lacking from the crucial passage of the entire section; namely, that which is connected with the virgin birth of Christ, quoted from the Septuagint. Keim recognizes the difficulty, for he twice says that the interpolator used that version because it was "indispensable to his purpose." That is to say, that he could not have conveyed the idea of the virgin birth without the use of the Septuagint translation. But why did he care to teach the virgin birth at all? His

purpose was to make the Gospel of Matthew more "liberal." What possible connection has the virgin birth with that purpose? Is it seriously held that he quoted Isaiah in support of the virgin birth as an attempt to make the story of Christ's life more attractive to Gentiles? He could have done this more effectively by entirely disconnecting the incident from prophecy. That the idea of the virgin birth was repugnant to deep Jewish feeling is the very nearest that we can come to giving the use of this passage a liberal turn. It looks, however, as if the doctrine were connected with ancient prophecy in order to make it less unpalatable to Jewish minds.

Keim's attempt to break the force of the use of the Septuagint by making it indispensable to his purpose turns upon the assumption that the Greek word *παρθένος* is an incorrect, or, at least, imperfect, rendering of the Hebrew word עַלְמָה. The interpolator, fond as he was of quoting from the Hebrew text, was compelled to depart from it in this instance for he could not render the Hebrew word correctly without obscuring or destroying his doctrine. Now the evidence upon which this statement is made and reiterated by one critic after another is very slender.

Gesenius says that the "primary idea in this word is not that of unspotted virginity, for which the Hebrews have the special word בְּתוּלָה, nor does it primarily signify the unmarried state, but simply the marriageable age, the age of puberty." Upon this he bases the statement that in the Septuagint Isaiah vii, 14 is incorrectly rendered. This totally ignores the fact that in the etymology of a word not only root meanings, but also uses, are to be taken into consideration.

The only passage which Gesenius alleges as evidence

that the word is used to designate any other than a virgin is Isaiah vii, 14, the very passage in dispute.[1]

As a matter of fact there is no conclusive evidence to show that the word was ever used in the Old Testament, except with reference to a virgin.

The following quotation grants all that is reasonable to the negative side in the question:—

"The meaning of עַלְמָה is from its comparatively rare use less easily determined. In Gen. xxiv, 43, it is used with reference to Rebekah, apparently in the sense of a *virgo intacta.*

"In Ca. vi, 8, the meaning is quite uncertain. The women in the harem of Solomon, distinguished as they are from the wives and concubines, might or might not be virgins. We cannot, therefore, argue from the usage of the word the meaning intended in Isaiah vii, 14; but the whole context of the passage as well as the analogy of viii, 14, suggests that the sign intended did not consist in anything miraculous in the birth itself, but in the speedy coming of the event, and in the symbolical name to be given to the child."[2] Personally, I believe that this statement might be made stronger on the positive side without doing violence to the truth, but as it stands it deals a death blow to the affirmation that the Septuagint is an incorrect rendering. Dr. G. A. Smith may be perfectly correct from the point of view of contemporary understanding in making the motherhood of the wonderful Child uncertain and obscure, but Matthew is also correct in interpreting the passage, in the light of the actual facts of Christ's life, as referring to the wonderful manner of His birth, and to the estate and character of His mother.

Mr. Woods suggests also that the Septuagint transla-

[1] See Gesenius on עַלְמָה, *Dict.*, p. 788.

[2] *Hastings B. D.* article, "Virgin."

tion was due to a belief that the woman was a virgin at the time the prophecy was spoken, though married perhaps afterwards. The Seventy had no hint of a virgin birth in mind.

We come, then, to this conclusion, justified by all the facts: That in the prophecy an indeterminate word was used, which allowed Matthew an escape from the virgin implication if he wished it, but since he did not, lent itself according to familiar usage, without violence or misinterpretation, to the illustration and enforcement of his statement concerning the manner of Christ's birth.[1]

The use of the Septuagint in this important passage of the section attacked does much to cut it loose from the work of the alleged interpolator. There is, however, much stronger evidence pointing in the same direction. This is the character of the passages introduced. There is contradiction involved in the very thought that an interpolator whose interest is in enforcing a liberalized form of Christianity would connect the passages with Old Testament prophecies. The five passages from prophecy which are connected with the critical points of Christ's early life are five separate items in a refutation of any other theory of the section than that it is the attempt of a Hebrew to recommend Christ to his own countrymen by connecting even the earliest events in His life with Old Testament prophecies. And with this interpretation other features of the section agree.

If the interpolator introduced the story of Herod and the wise men in the interest of a more liberal Christianity, he has failed most signally; for he has succeeded only in imparting a more intensely Hebraic cast to the narrative. Let us look at it. When the wise men appear, they ask the question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"

[1] Cf. Beecher, *Prophets and Promise*, p. 334, note.

The narrative introduces Gentiles in the act of approaching Christ, but they come seeking One who is so closely identified with the Jewish nation as to be known the world over as the King of the Jews. The tribute of the wise men to Israel is almost as marked as their reverence for the Child Himself. It falls in perfectly with the general purpose of Matthew to get outside testimony to the fact that Jesus was the long watched-for King of the Jewish nation. But the passage does not serve the purpose of a liberalizing interpolator. He would have been more likely to invent an incident which would exhibit Hebrews in the act of inviting strangers to share with them the glory of the Messiah's reign, and interpreting the Messiah as the Saviour of the world. This the passage does not do.

The Herod incident points the same way. The account occupies the consistent, unyielding Jewish attitude toward Herod. It represents him as doing what Jewish patriots always accused him of doing, viz., crushing out Jewish national aspirations. Herod was groping in the dark with his blood-stained sword for the Infant of Promise, because He threatened to become the living center around which Jewish national life might form itself anew. He knew little about the world's Saviour, and probably cared less, but he was intensely interested in any one proclaimed to be the King of the Jews. The integrity of the entire incident depends upon the intensely Hebrew conception of the Messiah as a national king. Any liberalizing writer who invented such an incident must have had a curiously inverted mind.

There is no clear expression of Christian universalism in the entire Infancy section of Matthew. It is Jewish throughout. And more, it possesses in a superlative degree that purpose which Keim calls the "one literary

passion" of the book, namely, the desire "to prove Jesus to be the true Messiah, certainly unexpected in this form, yet exactly so announced by all the utterances of God in the Old Testament."

He adds to this that the Gospel "appears in a favorable light, because it has not ignored the anti-Jewish thorn of offense in the life of Jesus." In addition to this, he maintains as "complete proof of its essential accuracy," that it exhibits "a Christ elevated, yet human, law-observing, yet superior to law, Jewish yet more than Jewish."

By the possession of all these features of the Gospel, which Keim adduces as especially worthy of commendation, the Infancy section demonstrates its right to a place in the Gospel. It is apologetic in its purpose. It does not ignore the anti-Jewish offense in the birth of Jesus, rather is so strongly apologetic that it risks being used as an authority against the virgin birth in order to bring forward and emphasize Joseph's tribute in word and deed to the innocence of Mary. It seeks to prove the Messiahship of Jesus by linking even the strange and unaccountable fact of His birth of a virgin mother to Old Testament prophecy. It exhibits Him as elevated in His birth, but human in His growth; Jewish in that He was born into a Jewish family observant of all the rites and ordinances of the Jewish law, yet more than Jewish in that in His advent He was the mystery of a new divine creation. There are many passages in Matthew which might more easily be severed from the main body of the sacred tradition than this section, which, by its grand consonance with the entire scheme and purpose of the Gospel, shows itself an unassailable part thereof. Keim's theory, as thus far considered, applies only to the Gospel of Matthew, and the arguments offered in rebuttal have been taken from that Gospel only. The arguments have been formed on

the basis of the acceptance of a late date for the origin of the Infancy section.

We now come to the question whether the assumption of a late date for the section is justified by the facts. Keim holds that the additions in Matthew and the story of Luke are to be dated, with the rest of Luke's Gospel, well on this side of the destruction of Jerusalem, *i. e.*, somewhat between A. D. 80 and 90.

I see no sufficient ground for placing the Gospel of Luke, as a whole, so late as the above date. According to the accepted chronology the events recorded in the Book of the Acts end somewhere between the years 59 (Harnack), and 63 (Lightfoot), and the composition of the book is almost certainly not later than 82 (see Ramsay, "St. Paul," p. 387). The Book of the Acts presupposes the Gospel. If we allow a reasonable time between the two parts of Luke's work, we are pushed almost inevitably the other side of the fall of Jerusalem, A. D. 70.[1]

In view of these facts the reasons adduced for the later date are not conclusive. The reason which Keim alleges is that the work shows evidence of having been written in the time after the fall of Jerusalem and the final destruction of the Jewish state, in that the interval between the fall of the city and the end of the world in the apocalyptic discourses of Jesus has indefinitely widened, and that a slow historic process emerges into view, in which the Gentiles are to be brought under the Gospel; while Matthew depicts the two events almost without perspective.

In the first place, in a discourse of such tremendous import, but treated so fragmentarily as it confessedly is in both accounts, it is impossible to draw any very certain

[1] On the date of Luke see Plummer, *Com. on Lk.*, Intro., sec. iv; and for novel reasoning for an early date, Blass, *Phil. Gosp.*, chap. iii. Cf. also Moffat, *Hist. N. T. Prologue*, p. 272.

conclusions from omissions or differences in emphasis between the two.

In the second place, Matthew does make an interval between the two events, an interval as great as that of Luke, although he treats it more briefly: "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all nations, and then shall the end come."[1]

Luke's interest in all things Gentile, leads him to place greater emphasis upon the interval in which the Gentiles are to come into the Kingdom. The details added to the description of the siege in Luke's account prove nothing except, perhaps, a more vivid imagination for such details on the part of the narrator.[2]

This process of reasoning brings the Infancy stories closer to the main body of the narrative. We are justified, however, in making a much sharper statement concerning them than this.

They show every evidence of being not late, but early, —one of the very earliest elements in the entire New Testament.

Nearly all who discuss this question seem to take it for granted that the Infancy stories are late additions to the apostolic tradition. But one seeks for the grounds of this conviction in vain.

Keim asserts that "we may safely call these accounts post-apostolic on the ground that Paul and the rest of the New Testament have as yet no inkling of a miraculous birth of Jesus, which indeed finds no strong support until after the middle of the second century, in the pages of Justin, in the epistles of Ignatius, and in the Gospel of James."[3]

[1] Matt. xxiv, 14.

[2] See Matt. xxiv, 15; Cf. Gloag, *Intro. Syn. Gospels*, p. 246.

[3] Page 45.

He also says that "the Jewish-Christian portions, even of the introductory narrative, in spirit, matter, and form, show the coloring of a later time than that of Matthew himself."

It would be interesting to have the evidences for this last assertion clearly set forth. In the "serried ranks of annotations," of which the great critic is justly proud, none are devoted to this particular assertion. And one may safely assert that they are not forthcoming because they are not in existence. There are but three particulars in the entire narratives which may, with any plausibility, be urged in proof of a late origin. All three are in Luke. First is the alleged metaphysical implication of the sentences attributed to the angel in which Jesus is called the Son of God.[1] In regard to this it may reasonably be suggested that if any metaphysical statement were intended, it would not have been allowed to remain implicit in a mere statement, but would have been reënforced by exposition and argument. It would have filled a larger place in the rest of the Gospel. The dependence of the divine Sonship of Jesus upon the method of His birth is not stated again. And the very wording of the passage indicates the meaning: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. . . . The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which shall be born shall be called the Son of God."[2]

In this passage nothing further is intended than the assertion that by the power of God, immediately exercised, she should become the mother of the Messiah promised

[1] See discussion below, p. 101.

[2] Luke i, 32, 35.

to the house of David, who by His transcendent holiness should gain the Messianic title, the Son of God.

The second feature which is urged in favor of a late origin is the universalism in Simeon's address, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation,[1] which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples. A light for the unveiling of the Gentiles (margin)."

In answer, we urge that this is no more than is contained in the first statement of the promise made to Abraham,[2] and the very next sentence shows us that we are still moving in the circle of Old Testament notions: "The glory of thy people Israel."

Again, the minor note in Simeon's address: "Behold, this child is set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." This sentence ought to be convincing evidence of an early origin for the account in which it is found; for it would have been impossible for any Christian to refer in that vague and elliptical manner to the great catastrophe of Christ's death, had it already occurred. The confident optimism of the narrative is scarcely qualified by this word of Simeon, who has caught the minor note of prophecy, such as was sounded in Isaiah, ch. 53, and also has seen more deeply than others into the corruptions of the age, which promised sorrow for the Messiah and those who loved Him. In favor of an early origin for the Infancy story may be urged the entire spirit, form, and matter of the narratives. They move within the narrow limits of Jewish-Messianic convictions in their very first application to Jesus. They contain no hint of the later doctrinal expansion, which brought the death of Christ into the framework of Chris-

[1] Luke ii, 29–32. [2] Gen. xii, 1–3.

tian thinking. They are much closer to the Old Testament even than the Epistle of James.

Of the songs in Luke, Ryle and James in the introduction to their edition of the Psalms of Solomon, say, "The writings which, in our opinion, most clearly approach our Psalms in style and character are the hymns preserved in the early chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, which in point of date of composition probably stand nearer to the Psalms of Solomon (70–40 B. C.) than any other portion of the New Testament (intro., p. lx.)."

In view of these facts, the contention for a late date is not at all successful.

Keim's statement concerning Paul and the other writers of the New Testament will be considered in a later chapter. We now pause to take up the affirmation that the Infancy narratives find no strong support until after the middle of the second century. There may be some difference of opinion as to what constitutes "strong" support, but considering all the circumstances the evidence for the Infancy documents is remarkably conclusive. It must be remembered that the first half of the second century is the most obscure period in the history of the church. The literary remains are scanty, and references are fragmentary. Nevertheless, the existence and circulation of Christian documents in all essentials corresponding to our Gospels is clearly manifest, and among them the narratives concerning the birth and infancy must be included.

To begin with, we may safely take issue with Keim on the date of Ignatius. The genuineness of his letters in the shorter Greek form is now practically undisputed, and the concensus of recent scholarship is that his martyrdom occurred under Trajan, and that consequently the letters are to be dated between A. D. 110 and 115 (110 Light-

foot, 110–115 Stanton. Between 110 and 117, Harnack, who holds that it may possibly be as late as 125).

These letters are full of allusions to the miraculous birth. (See Epistle to Ephesians, chaps. xviii, xix, etc.) In the 19th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians he says: "Now the virginity of Mary was hidden from the Prince of this world, as was also her offspring, and the death of the Lord; three mysteries of renown which were wrought in silence by God. How then was He manifested to the ages? A star shone forth in heaven above all the stars, the light of which was inexpressible, while its novelty struck men with astonishment. And all the rest of the stars, with the sun and moon, formed a chorus to this star, and its light was exceeding great above them all."

The latter part of the foregoing citation is commented upon by Dr. Stanton (Gospels as Hist. Doc., pt. I, p. 15) as exhibiting the use of an extra-canonical source, either oral or written. He says of the star-chorus: "This description differs markedly from the simple narrative of St. Matthew. It is unlikely that Ignatius is merely giving the rein to his imagination. We may conjecture that he had obtained the idea from the same source, whatever that was, as the words of the risen Christ which have just been discussed."

If this supposition is correct, then we have the following interesting fact: That there was in circulation in the first quarter of the second century a story based upon St. Matthew's account and differing from it only in the addition of picturesque and illustrative details, and not yet cut loose from the primitive narrative in the unrestrained use of the imagination. Since such a story must have been in existence some time in order to gain circulation and a certain amount of authority, the fact above stated alone goes a long way toward pushing the canonical narrative into the

first century. The fragment exhibits clearly the working of the mythic temper, and serves to emphasize the restrained sobriety of Matthew's account with its emphasis upon central facts and neglect of details. The statement of Ignatius, however derived, represents the transition from the historical spirit of the evangelists to the wonder-mongering spirit of the apocryphal gospels.

In the Epistle to the Trallians,[1] he says: "Stop your ears, therefore, when any one speaks to you at variance with Jesus Christ, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary, who was truly born and did eat and drink. He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, He was truly crucified and died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. He was also truly raised from the dead," etc. The succession of statements recalls to mind the Apostles' Creed, and the somewhat formal and stereotyped phraseology indicates that it was taken from some of those forms of catechetical instruction which afterwards developed into the old Roman symbol and the creeds.

His statements show clearly enough that the belief in the birth of Christ as narrated in the Gospels was considered in the first quarter of the second century an essential item in the historic faith, and also that denial of it was confined to those who questioned the reality of Christ's earthly life throughout. The alternatives of belief, as exhibited in the writings of Ignatius, seem to have been—the miraculous birth or docetism.[2]

The writings of Justin Martyr belong to a slightly later date, but in the statements and arguments which occupy many chapters of his works, there are several interesting items. In the first place, he confined himself with surprising carefulness to the canonical accounts.

[1] Cap. I, xx.

[2] See Note D, end of Volume.

There are several references to what may possibly be noncanonical sources,[1] but the changes are very slight, and contain merely explanatory or illustrative material—there is no invention of additional incidents. He uses both Gospels (see Apol. I: 33), and does not deviate from them in any matters of essential fact.

This latter consideration is especially important, for it shows that down to the middle of the second century the canonical account was kept by orthodox church teachers free from legendary invention, and treated as authoritative in connection with the birth of Christ.[2] The interval which separates Justin from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke,[3] together with the general accuracy of his citations, indicates the great care with which the evangelic tradition of the Lord's birth was guarded. Again, in the Dialogue, Justin put into the mouth of his imaginary opponent arguments against the miraculous birth which must have been derived from Jewish sources, and represent with great accuracy the unyielding ultra-Jewish attitude toward the whole subject. (See note and reference on page 35.)

This reference, together with the fact that there was throughout the second century, and reaching back to the period of the apostles, an unbroken succession of heretical teachers (Cerinthus, Carpocrates, Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, Gnostics, Docetae, Ebionites, Ophites, etc., some of whom did and some did not believe in the miraculous birth, but all of whom testify to its prevalence as a Christian doctrine) whose fundamental tenets compelled them to the rejection of the Infancy narratives, shows clearly that the canonical story of Christ's birth

[1] See Apology 32, Dialogue with Trypho, 23, 43, 100.
[2] Dial. 77, 78, 88, 102, etc.
[3] Cf. Dial. Cap. 75, with Matt. xvi, 18.

did not creep into a place of authority, but had been preserved with care as a sacred deposit after having passed through the fires of controversy. It is inconceivable that a section of the narrative should have endured such intense opposition had it not been well authenticated as apostolic in its origin. And throughout the entire controversy, there is no shred of documentary evidence from either side to indicate that any one questioned the derivation of the Infancy documents from the apostolic age.

Upon the basis of careful investigation of the patristic literature, Dr. Gore says: "We have evidence then that the virgin birth held a prominent place in the second century tradition or creed of the churches of Rome, Greece, Africa, Asia, Syria, and Palestine, Arabia. Such a consensus in the second century reaching back to its beginning, among very independent churches, seems to us, apart from any question of the Gospels, to prove for the belief an Apostolic origin.

It could not have taken such an undisputed position unless it had really had the countenance of the Apostolic founders of churches, of Peter and Paul and John, of James and the Lord's brethren."[1] It would seem as if Keim's assertion that the narrative of the Infancy receives no strong support until after the middle of the second century is effectually disposed of.[2] (See notes B and C at end of chapter.)

One other general consideration against Keim's view should be taken into account. The supposition that the Infancy narrative is at once Jewish and late would seem to be altogether inadmissible. In order to be late the narrative must be non-Jewish for the following reasons:

First. The Jewish Christian church at Jerusalem was

[1] See Admission of Lobstein on this point in Birth of Christ: Preface.

[2] Dissertations, pp. 48, 49. See entire statement.

finally broken up in A. D. 135. No other Jewish-Christian community was strong enough to have created a legend which would have been accepted by the church in general.

Second. From the death of James (A. D. 62 or 63) until the date of Hadrian's edict against the Jews the control of the Jerusalem church was vested in a succession of bishops, all of whom according to Eusebius[1] (who uses Hegesippus as authority) were "of the circumcision," *i. e.*, strict observance Jews, and the church was of the same character.

"During the period, indeed from the outbreak of troubles, A. D. 62, till long after the suppression of Barcochab's revolt, they must often have been sorely harassed by political convulsions, and by the persecutions which they had to endure at the hands of their compatriots who did not believe in Jesus."[2]

It is extremely unlikely that churches ruled by strictly Jewish bishops, and passing through such tumultuous experiences, would have originated innovations in the evangelic tradition so serious as are involved in the Infancy narrative. All considerations, therefore, of which there are many, pointing to an early Palestinian origin, as strongly point to a date for their origination previous to the death of James, in the very heart of the Apostolic era.[3]

[1] H. E., Bk. iv, cap. v.

[2] Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Doc.*, Pt. I, p. 253.

[3] For statement of probable occasion when questionings on subject of Christ's birth arose see Gore: *Dissert.*, p. 12.

NOTE A

Gardner (Historical View of the New Testament, p. 163) repeats this argument of Keim but cannot be said to have added greatly to its cogency. The argument exhibits a naïve unconsciousness of a perfectly obvious distinction. Gardner says: "It is quite true that Matthew and Luke tell both of the miraculous birth and the descent of the Spirit at baptism, but in doing so they combine two inconsistent explanations of the same truth. For it is clear that if Jesus was filled with the Spirit from His mother's womb, there was no need that that Spirit should come upon Him at His baptism." To

say nothing of the failure to distinguish (as Keim has done) between the Spirit looked upon as creative energy and as a person, this argument overlooks the fact that all the requirements of the Gospel narrative which brings together the miraculous birth and the baptism would be met by the simple and necessary supposition, that the Spirit who had been energizing in the life and being of Jesus from the beginning was then consciously and completely accepted in His personal manifestation as Inspirer and Guide. The experience of the baptism certainly could not have been without some relationship to Jesus' past experience. How did He know that the Spirit had been manifested to Him, and bestowed in full measure upon Him at the Baptism? Simply because the lofty experience of that hour at the Jordan, the critical importance of which I would not for a moment seem to underestimate, was the culmination of a series of gracious experiences, (the full significance of which he may not have hitherto understood) which reached back even to His childhood. The baptismal experience was the key which unlocked the secret of His whole life. But its importance and value consist in the fact that it was so related to His entire life, past and future, as to give us a revelation of its quality throughout. Instead of being inconsistent with the account of the Baptism, the miraculous birth and the story of the youthful visit at Jerusalem are necessary to any intelligible explanation of the Baptism. The latter experience is intelligible only as a culminating revelation of an inspired and God-filled life. The real significance of this argument of Keim and Gardner is that up to the time of the Baptism, Jesus was not the Son of God in any special sense, that He had no relationship, conscious or unconscious, to the Holy Spirit; that He was (in the theological sense) a natural man and that, at the Baptism, a new being was created. This robs the entire life of Jesus previous to His ministry of any significance or value. Gardner also argues from a parallelism between the experience of the believer and that of the Master. "Paul says that the followers of Christ are buried with Him in baptism. This view is explicable only on the supposition that the Spirit was given to believers as to their Master in baptism. This new birth they share with Him, that they may also share His life."

It is, of course, not fair to force an inference too far, but the implication of this last sentence inevitably carries one a long way. It, of course, implies that at His baptism the Lord experienced a "new birth." Not only are *we* to be born again, but Jesus had to be born again, and the question necessarily arises: What was Jesus before this new birth occurred? What did His new birth involve? In our case it involves a change from a natural unspiritual, sinful condition of greater or less alienation from God into a new filial and spiritual temper and life. Does the parallel hold in the case of Jesus? Was He changed by this new birth from a sinner into God's anointed, or merely from a clod lacking the divine fire? For if the experience

at the baptism necessarily excludes a miraculous conception by the power of the Holy Spirit, it with equal force excludes all inspiration or even vital contact with the Spirit from all the pre-baptismal life of Jesus. It seems to me that the argument carries those who make it into deeper waters than they are aware.

This question apart, however, I doubt the force of the parallel. For I do not believe that any experience comparable with that of Jesus at the Jordan was ever undergone by a believer *de novo*. No man ever consciously and completely entered into a gracious relationship of dependence and obedience with the Spirit as a Person without premonitions, without anticipatory experiences, without being moved and won by the Spirit in previous conscious experiences, and certainly not without the secret workings of the Spirit in the life. Even if the supposition that the birth of Jesus was purely natural were true, I cannot believe that the Baptism was so entirely revolutionary and sporadic as these statements imply. In short the argument against the miraculous birth drawn from the experience at the Jordan fails utterly to justify itself.

NOTE B

The lack of documentary evidence as to the use of the creed in the sub-apostolic age is at least partially explained by the fact that the Christians kept the statements of their belief as sacred arcana not on any account to be made common property by being committed to writing and put into circulation, but to be preserved religiously in the memory. Lumby in the first chapter of his book on the History of the Creeds shows this fact and adduces the literature which exhibits it. When the creeds first appear in Christian literature, the creeds of all the historic churches are so nearly identical as to point unmistakably to a common source, and the very fact that they were looked upon as sacred, too sacred to be communicated to the public or put in writing, together with the no less certain fact that during the period to which our documents refer, creeds underwent practically no changes except in minor points of phraseology, is strong evidence of their authoritative apostolic origin. (Cambridge, 1880.)

NOTE C

H. B. Swete (The Apostles' Creed, Cam., 1894, pp, 42, ff.) in rebuttal of Harnack, has made a very clear exhibition of the evidence for the antiquity of the doctrine of the miraculous birth.

From the statement of the Roman Creed of the fourth century, in which the miraculous birth holds a forward place he follows the belief, step by step, through Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Aristides, Ignatius. A collateral line of evidence is followed through the various heretical sects and teachers to the beginning of the second century. Those heresiarchs

who accept the fact do so "on the authority of the Gospels, and not as a tradition inherited from the church;" and those who deny do not allege on their side a lack of apostolic authority for the doctrine.

Still another thread of proof is connected with the Jewish attitude toward the doctrine. Finding that the Christians were united in denying Joseph's paternity and evidently unable to adduce any satisfactory evidence in its favor, they accepted the denial and made it the basis of an attack upon the honor of Jesus' home. This was familiar argument to Celsus. The details of this disgusting and blasphemous Pantheras story lends probability to the view that it goes back anterior to the age of Hadrian, and the "impression is confirmed which has been received from the letters of Ignatius as to the wide diffusion of this belief among Christians of the generation which immediately followed the death of St. John."

For the sources of the doctrine we are thus forced back to the Gospels themselves. Justin states that the doctrine was learned from the Memoirs, and his references are mostly to St. Luke, though not exclusively. Ignatius, on the other hand, appears to be independent of both narrators.

"If he leans to either, it is to St. Matthew, but, on the whole, his words leave the impression that he either refers to some third document perhaps akin to our first Gospel, or is simply handing in a fact which had been taught him orally, probably when he first received the Faith. The latter supposition carries us back, perhaps far back, into the first century."

The story of the Infancy lay outside the plan both of Mark and John, but forms an integral part of Luke's story. Marcion's mutilated Gospel began with an arbitrary fusion of iii, 1, and iv, 31, yet if, as is altogether probable, the first two chapters formed a part of the original Gospel, "the most important record of the conception is carried back, let us say, to A. D. 75–80, a terminus *ad quem* for the publication of the third Gospel accepted by one of the most cautious and far seeing of living New Testament scholars," (*i. e.* Sanday). Then follows a most interesting statement of facts which have been generally overlooked in the discussion.

"The style of Luke i, 5 to ii, 52, clearly points to sources older than the Gospel itself. There are indeed correspondences of style and vocabulary which connect this section with the rest of the Gospel and show that the whole book has passed through the hands of the same compiler; yet the section betrays unmistakably, as we think, an independent origin. It has an archaic tone; its thought and spirit are Judæo-Christian; the hymns which characterize it are permeated by the thought and language of the Old Testament; the narrative preserves a simplicity which contrasts not only with St. Luke's formal dialogue, but with his rendering of the Synoptic tradition." Every consideration thus urges to the acceptance of an early date for the Infancy narratives.

CHAPTER IV

THE THEORY OF LATE COMPOSITE ORIGIN—SOLTAU

The theory of Soltau[1] as to the origin of the Infancy stories differs somewhat from Keim's, especially in the place which he gives to heathen influences, and in his assertion of a later date for completion of the story. He says: "Toward the end of the first century Bethlehem was regarded as the real birthplace of Jesus. Upon this foundation were built up the two narratives which now stand at the beginning of the first and third Gospels."[2]

It will be seen that the foundation of the story was not laid until about the end of the first century. The work of developing the legend must have been done after that date.

The author next proceeds to involve Luke in the chronological difficulty concerning the death of Herod. He says flatly, "Herod the Great, under whom Jesus is supposed to have been born, was already dead." This argument has been very generally abandoned as incorrect.[3]

In stating some of the difficulties involved in the two stories, Soltau makes at least one serious error of his own. He says, "We learn from Matthew, on the other hand, that Bethlehem was the real native place of Joseph and Mary."[4] As a matter of fact, we do not learn anything of the kind.

[1] *The Birth of Jesus Christ*, by W. Soltau, A. and C. Black, London.

[2] P. 25, cf. Keim, quoted on p. 60.

[3] See H. B. D. Art.: N. T. Chron., also Ramsay, Was Christ born at Bethlehem? Cap. X.

[4] P. 30.

According to Soltau, there was a process of growth, by accretion and redaction, from the fundamental misconception that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem to the elaborate legend as it now stands in the Gospels.

The first form of it was a story[1] "current in Palestinian circles, which represented that Jesus actually came from Nazareth, but was born as a descendant of David in Bethlehem, and was really derived in the male line from David himself, though the story even in this developed form knew nothing as yet of the virgin birth of Jesus. It described in a genuinely Jewish[2] way the joy manifested by the oldest generation when the Messiah appeared, and was only legendary in so far as it acquiesced in the dogmatic views which required that the Messiah should be born only in David's native place."

"The next step in this building-up process was a further-developed Jewish-Christian version of the story, to the effect that Jesus, the son of Joseph, of the tribe of David, was born in Bethlehem, and from that place journeyed to Nazareth, a story recounted in a different form and with different ideas from those of the account in the First and Third Evangelists." To this developed story Luke added as details:—

1. Generation of Jesus through the Holy Spirit (i, 25-56).

2. The Angels' Song of Praise (ii, 8-20).

Matthew has connected the virgin birth with Jesus, and the visit of the Magi.

The song attributed to the angels was taken even in verbal details from certain inscriptions discovered recently

[1] Pp. 28, 29.

[2] This admission as to the early composition of the songs is really fatal, for the songs are an integral part of the story, and are logically and vitally connected with the miraculous birth. See discussion Chap. VI.

in Asia Minor, in which was expressed the common joy felt over the birth of the Emperor Augustus.

The adoration of the Magi was altogether based upon heathen mythology. The story of the Magi is made up of two elements taken from very different sources: The sign of the star from the celestial phenomena, connected in popular mythology with the birth of great men, and the journey of the wise men from the east from a story of the journey of the Parthian King Tiridates and his Magians from the East in the time of Nero (A. D. 66).

Soltau says, that "in the joyful Christmas message (Luke ii, 14), the terms in which in those days it was usual to pay homage to the earthly prince of peace, Augustus, were applied quite spontaneously to the heavenly Prince of Peace, so the first evangelists felt that the journey of the Magi from the East, which threw the whole cultured world into a state of astonishment, could only be explained, if their act of adoration might be transferred from the anti-Christ Nero to the Messiah."[1]

The virgin birth, which is not accounted for in the natural history of the legend thus far, is to be viewed under three aspects:—

1. As regards form, the whole narrative is simply a deliberate recast of the older Jewish fables about Samson and John.

2. As regards matter, on the other hand, it is to be explained as a transformation of biblical conceptions, due to misconception.

3. At the same time, those elements drawn from heathen mythology can be detected which promoted the transformation of Christian ideas, and the development of a wrong conception.

The matter in the early chapters was built up almost

[1] Pp. 39, 40.

verse by verse upon the original foundation of the story of John by gradual accretions and successive redactions, until we come to the finished product of the double legend. The finished product is very late, for, according to the theory, the legend was completed after the views of Paul and John were published and had time to percolate into the popular mind and start up a reaction in the shape of legendary stories.

"When the Pauline and Johannine Christology,[1] having been translated into popular language, penetrated to the lower classes of the people, it was almost bound to lead to the view becoming current amongst Christians untrained in philosophy, that Christ, in calling God his Father, did not merely call Him so in the sense in which all are children of God, but that He was even bodily of 'higher derivation,' of divine origin. Here, then, the myth-making imagination of Christians, roused to religious enthusiasm, settled, and sought to remodel in a form intelligible to the senses what had been puzzled out by the brains of philosophers and dogmatists; and in this task, widely diffused heathen fables again came to their assistance."

Now that this theory lies fully before me, I confess to no little hesitation in undertaking to criticise it. It is so complicated and so ingenious, and yet so full of logical inconsistencies and unprovable assumptions. The logical tangle into which its statements lead is so complete that I find it very difficult to understand how its author himself could have overlooked it.

On page twenty-five, he says: "Toward the end of the first century, Bethlehem was regarded as the real birthplace of Jesus. Upon this foundation were built up the two narratives, which now stand at the beginning of the first and third Gospels."

[1] Pp. 44, 45.

On page forty-eight, he says: "The idea that the Holy Spirit begat Jesus can have no other than a Hellenic origin. Note here that the idea did not certainly arise until toward the end of the first century, or cannot have come to be commonly held."

We have here a curious process. There came into existence near the end of the first century a conviction that Jesus must be born at Bethlehem. From this beginning, by an elaborate process of building up, detail upon detail, through the addition to the primitive tradition of detached fragments from all imaginable sources culminating finally in the fiction of the virgin birth, which is itself a complicated, manufactured article, the completed fable came to be, and yet the beginning and the ending of this whole process is dated at the same time. The conviction that Jesus must be born at Bethlehem arose about the end of the first century, the Hellenic conception of the miraculous birth arose about the end of the first century, and yet between the two lies a process of development, which would require at least a half century to consummate. If this is "scientific criticism," one would like to see what sort of work old-fashioned dogmatism would make of the interpretation of the documents.

One can see plainly enough where the difficulty lies. The process of building up an elaborate legend from such humble beginnings as a simple belief that Jesus was born at Nazareth of Joseph and Mary, into the story as we now have it, by adding details borrowed from Old Testament stories, heathen mythology, and Imperial edicts, requires time and a great deal of it. The process must be supposed to begin late because time must be allowed for the sharp outlines of the "genuine tradition" to become blurred—this accounts for the beginning of the process at about the end of the first century. It is unsafe to carry the pro-

cess of formation too far into the second century for we begin to have some definite results as to the establishment of the canon and the formation of church creeds; hence the completion of the process is put about the end of the first century.

But it is clearly impossible that such a process as the theory describes could have occupied less than half a century. If the foundation of the legend was laid, as Soltau affirms, in the dogma of the Bethlehem birth about the end of the first century, then the capstone of the virgin birth could not have been in place before A. D. 150. We have indubitable evidence that the virgin birth had recognized credal standing in all the principal churches long before that date.

I do not propose to deal with Soltau's theory of piecemeal growth in detail; it really is not worth while. The theory is sufficiently condemned on general principles of common sense and logical consistency.

But I do propose to take up a few specimens of the critical work, which has gone into the elaboration of the theory.

In the first place, it is noticeable that he assumes that any similarity between heathen stories and the incidents connected with the birth of Jesus is evidence enough that the Christian writer borrowed from the heathen as a source, provided there is a bare possibility that the Christian writer was acquainted with the authority in question. For example, the words attributed by Luke to the angel is said to be taken verbatim from congratulatory inscriptions on the birth of Augustus.

"The writer transferred them to the times when his Saviour was born; for no one, who decides the question from a scientific standpoint, could really doubt the priority of the Asiatic inscriptions to the first beginnings of a history of the childhood of Jesus."

Now notice the assumptions upon which this conclusion rests :—

1. That the inscriptions were prior to the composition of the angels' song in Luke's Gospel.

2. That the angels' song was of heathen origin. Soltau says in the texts that the "ideas in the angels' song may be of purely heathen origin," and in a note, "This, of course, excludes the idea that the form, which they have taken was due to Jewish-Christians; we may be sure that they are not of Palestinian origin."

3. That the writer was familiar with the inscriptions and transferred them to his Saviour. If any one of these three assumptions breaks down, the theory goes with it.

Now of the assumptions, we may say of the first that it is probably correct, if the date assigned to the inscriptions is accurate. The history of the Augustan period is notably obscure, and all conclusions concerning dates are to be held with caution.

As to the second assumption, we may safely say that it is contradicted by two patent facts. First, its connection with the doctrine of angels, which, in the form given it in the Infancy narrative, is a distinctly Jewish conception.[1] Second, the song of the angels is a fragment of a poem originally written in Hebrew with the distinctive Hebrew parallelism still remaining. Unfortunately, the writer has chosen one of the most ancient and characteristically Hebraic portions of the New Testament as exhibiting late heathen influence.[2]

As to the third assumption, we have no evidence to justify a conclusion one way or the other. The confident assertion that the song of the angels was framed from Imperial inscriptions is shattered upon the actual facts.

[1] See Hastings B. D., article *Angels*, also note at end of Chap. vi.

[2] Briggs, *New Light on L. J.*, p. 163.

It is hardly necessary to add that the inscriptions themselves coincide with Luke only in the use of words commonly used in classic and Hellenic Greek. The similarity between the inscriptions and the passage in Luke is not striking enough to warrant any definite conclusion apart from other considerations.[1]

Another specimen of Soltau's critical method is seen in his attempt to account for the story of the wise men. He fails altogether to see, or at least to mention, the interdependence of this story with the incident of the massacre of the Innocents and the flight into Egypt. In Matthew's account, the visit and inquiry of the wise men for the newborn King called Herod's attention to His birth; made the flight into Egypt necessary; and occasioned the slaughter of the Innocents. This does not prevent the critic, however, from ascribing the closely knit narrative to several independent sources.

The massacre of the Innocents and the flight into Egypt was due to the influence of the Old Testament precedents.[2] The star of the wise men was taken from the common mythology, in which celestial phenomena are said to have accompanied the birth of great men. The journey of the wise men, however, was due to a story recorded by Pliny and repeated with variations by Dio Cassius of a visit of King Tiridates, and the Magians to Nero. The writer of the account in Matthew could not believe that this visit of respect and worship could have been made to such a monster as Nero, and therefore made free to correct history by attributing the visit to Jesus. He took great pains, however, to suppress the fact that there was a king among the visitors, although the Christian imagination has delighted to think that kings came to worship the King

[1] See Soltau's proof passages in appendix to his book.

[2] Ex. i, 15.

of kings. He lost a great opportunity in suppressing the fact that there was a king among the Magi. Think, too, of the cosmopolitan comprehensiveness of a mind that could take an incident from the Old Testament and remodel it, a feature from current mythology, and a fact of Roman imperial history, and weave them together so that the star (taken from current mythology) led the wise men on a journey (taken from the history of Nero's reign) to seek the king, upon whom Herod made a murderous attempt (according to the Old Testament mythology) which would have succeeded if the Child had not fled to Egypt (according to Old Testament precedent), and the wise men returned home another way (according to Dio Cassius).

The whole contention depends for its plausibility on the assumption, first, that the account in Matthew is late, which is contradicted by the Christology of the entire section; second, that the writer was familiar with the incidents of Roman court life, for which there is not the slightest foundation; third, that the writer would have accepted with equal facility ideas from the Old Testament, current mythology, and Roman history, which is contradicted by every single implication of the passage. In the facts of the case the explanation has not a leg to stand upon.

Once more, I wish to call attention to the curious natural history, which the critic ascribes to the idea of the virgin birth:—

In form—a deliberate recast of older Jewish fables about Samson, and John the Baptist.

In matter—a transformation of biblical conceptions, such as those found in the Christologies of Paul and John. In final outcome—modified by heathen elements.

This elaborate explanation also breaks into fragments upon actual facts:—

1. It calls for a late origin, *i. e.*, after the publication and common acceptance of the writings of John and Paul, which is contradicted by the nature of the documents, and by the known facts of Christian thought of the early second century.[1]

2. The virgin birth in its statement in the Infancy narrative is not doctrinal in its form. It is stated as a historical fact without elaboration or development.

3. The documents, in which the statement is found, and of which it is a component part, are essentially Jewish.

The entire theory of Soltau breaks down upon three unassailable facts:—

1. The narratives, each of Matthew and Luke, are units. They have one central formative principle, close inter-relation of parts, and unbroken flow of narrative.

2. The narratives are ancient. This has been demonstrated at length in these pages, and is an assured result of criticism.

3. The narratives are Jewish—the convincing evidence for this has been urged at length.[2][3][4]

In contrast with the work of Soltau, which seems to me a travesty upon criticism, I wish to place before the reader

[1] One might easily overlook the insuperable difficulties involved in this theory. The Infancy narrative according to Soltau originated among simple-minded people, familiar with the teachings of Paul and John, but incapable of understanding them in the sense intended by their authors. These people succeeded in concocting a crude theory of their own to explain the greatness of Jesus, and in thrusting it up over the heads of their leaders and teachers into a secure place among the documents of Christianity, and the creeds of the church.

[2] See Lobstein, p. 129.

[3] See Fairbairn, *Phil. Christian Religion*, p. 518, quoted in note at end of volume. Also *Ibid.*, p. 349, on character of the narrative of Infancy.

[4] For a statement of this by one clearly alive to all the difficulties involved in the narratives, see Mathews: *Mess. Hope in N. T.*, p. 233.

a specimen of sane and scholarly criticism working upon the documents of the Infancy. Dr. C. A. Briggs, of New York, is known on both sides of the Atlantic as a critic who is thoroughly committed to the documentary theory both of the Old Testament and the New. I take the liberty of quoting a chapter from his recent book on "New Light on the Life of Christ."[1] I may say that most of my book was written before I had the privilege of seeing the work of Dr. Briggs.

"The Gospels of Mark and John agree in having no gospel of the infancy of Jesus. This was due, doubtless, to a lack of interest in that part of the life of Jesus, as well as to the fact that both of these Gospels seem to be limited to the testimony of what the primary authorities themselves had seen and heard, St. Peter in Mark, and St. John in the Gospel of John; that is, in both Gospels in their original forms.

"The later editors, doubtless owing to a more dogmatic interest, thinking of Jesus as the Son of God and divine, had still less interest in the infancy of Jesus. The gospel of the Infancy is confined to a brief statement in Matthew i, 18 to ch. ii to which a genealogy of Jesus is prefixed; and a fuller statement, Luke i–ii, to which a genealogy is appended, iii, 23–38, the ministry of John being inserted, iii, 1–22.

"The fact, that in both cases the gospel of the Infancy is attached to genealogies shows an interest in proving that Jesus was the son of David, the heir of the promises to David and his seed, and so the Messiah. The fact that Luke's genealogy goes back to Adam shows a human interest, and a universalism characteristic of the Roman disciple of St. Paul. The stories of the Infancy, told by Matthew, were all to show that Jesus was the Messiah of

[1] Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Prophecy: (1) The annunciation to Joseph and birth of Jesus, as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah respecting Immanuel. (2) The adoration of the Magi, as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. (3) The blood-bath of Bethlehem and the flight into Egypt, as fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah, of Rachel weeping for her children; and the prediction of Hosea that, 'out of Egypt did I call my son.' (4) The return to Nazareth, as fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah that He should be called a Nazarene.

"It is evident that none of this was found in the original Gospels of Matthew or Mark. These are all additions inserted by the author of the canonical Matthew. This conception of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy by these events as stated by this author, is doubtless a crude interpretation of the Old Testament Scripture. We may, however, find a sufficient number of parallels in the Rabbinical methods of the time. We are to explain them, therefore, not in accordance with modern principles of interpretation, but in accordance with those principles which were in use in the times of Jesus.

"Did these stories come from an oral source, or from a written source? Matt. i, 20, 21 gives a little piece of poetry. This is not complete in itself. It was taken from a longer poem. Its contents show that the longer poem contained a fuller account of the story of the Annunciation to Joseph. We may therefore say that the story of the Annunciation to Joseph, and the birth of Jesus, was taken from this poem and given by the author of our Matthew in prose with the exception of this extract. This piece has the parallelisms and measures of Hebrew poetry. We may, therefore, conclude that there was a poem in the Hebrew language, which has been translated for the present Gospel. The other stories do not contain

such poetic extracts, and, therefore, we cannot use the same argument for a written source. But they are Hebraistic in style. It is possible that these also were in the same poem; but we have no evidence of it, in their composition or their context. They may, therefore, have come from an oral source. The use that is made of them in the canonical Matthew, to show that Jesus was the Messiah of Prophecy, we may safely say, was not in the source, whether oral or written, but was due to the author of the Gospel himself.

"The fullest report of the story of the Infancy of Jesus is given in Luke. The story is composed of a number of pieces of poetry. The prose narrative gathers about these; and is chiefly of the nature of seams to build the poetry together into a harmonious story. These poems are: (1) The Annunciation to Zacharias, a trimeter poem in the original Hebrew in two strophes of different lengths, evidently incomplete in the translation. (2) The Annunciation to Mary, four pieces of trimeter poetry of different lengths connected by seams, evidently incomplete in their present form. (3) The Annunciation to the Shepherds, two pieces of trimeter poetry, evidently extracts from a larger piece. (4) The Song of Elisabeth, and (5) the Song of the Virgin, the Magnificat of the Church, both trimeter poems, more complete than the others, but probably also incomplete. (6) The Song of Zacharias, the Benedictus of the Church. This seems to be of the pentameter movement. It is uncertain whether we should divide it into five or into two strophes. It is the most complete of the poems, but it is by no means certain that the whole of it has been preserved. (7) The song of Simeon is a trimeter poem, which is certainly incomplete in the parts of two strophes that have been preserved. This is the Nunc Dimittis of the church.

"These seven pieces of poetry are a series of annunciations and of songs of gratitude and praise, all with marked characteristics of Hebrew poetry, not only in form, but in the style and substance of the thought. They are not complete in themselves, but extracts from poems. This raises the question whether they were not originally parts of larger poems, rather than each from different and independent poems. Six of them have the same trimeter movement, and may all be from the same poem. One of them is a pentameter, like the pentameter preserved in Matthew, and therefore both of these may be from the same poem. May we, therefore, think of two long poems, each giving a poetic account of the birth and infancy of Jesus? Or are we to think of a number of little poems each taking up a different theme? It seems more probable that we have to think of two original poems of this kind, the one chiefly used by Matthew, the other chiefly used by Luke. At all events, so far as Luke is concerned, his story of the Infancy is nothing more than a prose setting for these seven poetic pieces given by him. These poems were certainly originally in Hebrew; they were also certainly before him in written documents, one or more. They were written sources as truly as the original Mark, and the original Matthew,—all alike in the Hebrew language. They must have been composed before the destruction of Jerusalem, either in the Christian congregation of Jerusalem, or the Christian community in Galilee; therefore by early Christian poets who had access to the family of Jesus, certainly to His brother James the head of the Jerusalem Church, and possibly also to the Virgin Mother of our Lord; and to others who could speak as eyewitnesses or earwitnesses of these matters embodied in verse. Making every allowance for the poetic form, style, and conception, these poems are sources of the high-

est value, and of the first degree of historic importance, as belonging with the original Hebrew Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and John, rather than with the later Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, as we now have them.

"They give us information as to the Infancy of Jesus, and as to the Virgin Mother, which is necessary to complete the story of their lives, and to give us a complete understanding of their character. Indeed this gospel of the Infancy as enshrined not only in the first and third Gospels, but also in the Canticles of the Church derived from them, has had more influence upon Christian worship, and no less influence upon Christian doctrine, than the more dogmatic statements of the Epistles. There is no sound reason to reject it as merely legendary in its material. There is every reason to accept it as giving a valid and essentially historic account of the Infancy of our Lord, so far as it could be reasonably expected in poetic forms."

NOTE TO CHAPTER IV

There are two statements in this chapter to which especial interest is attached.

The first is the assertion (quoted on p. 97) that "none of this" (that is the prophetic passages quoted by Matthew in connection with the incidents of Christ's birth and infancy) "was found in the original Gospels of Matthew or Mark. These are all additions inserted by the author of the canonical Matthew." The bearing of this statement upon the question of the influence of the prophecies upon the story is evident. According to Dr. Briggs (see p. 99) the facts told concerning the Infancy were taken from written sources belonging to the primitive groundwork of the Gospels, while the connection with prophecy was made by the literary author or editor of the completed Gospel. The reader may compare this statement with the remark made on p. 34 of the present work. "He (the author of the Gospel) did not come to Jesus through the prophecies; he came to the prophecies through Jesus."

Along with this is to be placed the further striking statement which, in view of the facts adduced, it would be very difficult to dispute. "So far as

Luke is concerned, his story of the Infancy is nothing more than a prose setting for these seven poetic pieces given by him.

"Making every allowance for the poetic form, style, and conception, these poems are sources of the highest value, and of the first historic importance, as belonging with the original Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and John, rather than with the later Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John as we now have them."

When it is remembered that the historic incidents which enter into Luke's prose setting for the poems are essentially involved in the poems themselves, the sound historic basis of the Lukan account becomes manifest. The contention elsewhere maintained in these pages that the Infancy documents form a part of the primitive basis of the gospels, and are among the earliest of the component parts of the New Testament finds abundant support in this chapter from Dr. Briggs' work.

CHAPTER V

THE THEORY OF EARLY MYTHO-THEOLOGICAL ORIGIN—LOBSTEIN

In the preceding chapters, a detailed examination was made of the theories of Keim and Soltau to account for the origin of the Infancy stories with the result that they were found to lead us into a tangle of difficulties and contradictions from which there seems to be no escape except by rejecting the theories altogether.

In the present chapter, I propose taking up the theory set forth by Professor Lobstein, of the University of Strassburg, in a monograph entitled, "The Virgin Birth of Christ."[1]

This theory is far more ably constructed than Keim's, is advocated more persuasively and, it must be acknowledged, has more warrant in the facts.

Lobstein admits that the theory of late origin for the documents is untenable—at least his theory pushes them well back into the apostolic age, while, at the same time, it cuts them away from the main body of the evangelic tradition.

In what follows, I shall consider this positive and constructive theory only. His objections to the narratives, in so far as they are new, have been incorporated into the first chapter.

Lobstein advocates his theory with great confidence. It is my purpose to discover whether that confidence is well founded.

[1] Crown Library.

Lobstein states his theory in outline in the following words:—

[1] "The miraculous birth of Jesus vanishes away, or rather is resolved into a myth created by popular devotion and destined to explain the divine Sonship of Christ by His supernatural generation. Thus received, the conception of our two evangelists is an important landmark in the development of Scriptural Christology; if it ceases to remain a real fact in the history of Jesus, it stands out as the characteristic creation of the faith of the church." And the process was this: "Between the primitive outlook of popular Messianic belief, and the point reached by speculative thought in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, we may place the tradition which has been preserved in the double narrative of the Protevangel . . . the explanation disclosed in the Gospels of the nativity is the physical explanation of the divine Sonship of Jesus."

Lobstein relies for proof of this claim principally upon the statement attributed to the angel in Luke i, 35, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing . . . shall be called the Son of God.[2]

"The expression 'Son of God' must be taken in its most literal sense; the Holy Ghost is the author of the corporeal and material life of Jesus, the maker of His whole personality: the divine Sonship of Christ implies a communication of the substance of God; it is a physical filiation."[3]

And this is the way in which they arrived at the notion of the virgin birth. It was a general tendency of the Israelitish mind to ignore second causes, and to emphasize the agency of God. Wonders were multiplied round the cradles of national heroes, and a special divine action

[1] Page 110. [2] Page 66. [3] Page 67.

affirmed in connection with their birth. Isaac and others of the fathers and heroes of the race were children of "promise." The agency of the human father was not excluded, but was passed over in order to emphasize the immediate efficiency of God. The next step was easy enough.

"It was natural that the Christian consciousness, absolutely convinced of the divine nature of the work and inspiration of Christ, should have attempted to explain the birth and nature of the Messiah by a greater miracle than any which had presided over the origin of the most famous prophets.[1]

"Being greater than those who received the Holy Spirit from their earliest infancy, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit; His life proceeds directly from the life of God Himself; His entire personality is an immediate creation of the divine activity—the primitive and essential relationship which unites Jesus to God is not only a bond of spiritual sonship, it embraces the life of the body no less than that of the soul; the divine Sonship of Jesus is a physical filiation."

This whole process was aided by the famous verse from Isaiah (vii, 14) for the use of which the LXX had prepared the way by admitting the inadmissible translation, virgin, for the original Hebrew.

I have stated Lobstein's theory in his own words and sufficiently at length to bring clearly before the reader the striking fact that in the very statement of his theory, he is forced into self-contradiction.

In one place, he says that "like the speculative thesis of the preëxistence of Christ, the Gospel narrative of the supernatural birth of Jesus is an explanatory formula, an attempt to solve the Christological problem."[2]

[1] Page 71. [2] Page 72.

In another place he says, "The conception of the miraculous birth of Christ is the fruit of religious feeling, the echo of Christian experience, the poetic and popular expression of an affirmation of faith."[1]

Now it is perfectly certain that while the narrative of the Infancy may be either one of these two things, it cannot be both at the same time.

An "explanatory formula" which is an attempt to solve the Christological problem cannot be the "fruit of religious feeling," nor the "echo of Christian experience."

I am not juggling with words. Lobstein's theory contains a fundamental and irreducible contradiction—the iron is mingled with clay.

When Christ has become a problem for the intellect to be solved by explanatory formulæ, he has passed entirely out of the region of mere religious feeling, and altogether out of the reach of popular imagination. Lobstein has evidently felt this difficulty, for he attempts to scale down the contradiction by saying, "If the theory of the preexistence is the theological corollary of a religious axiom, the study of the miraculous birth is not so much the result of dogmatic thought, as the fruit of popular imagination." The difficulty is not removed by this fine-spun distinction. Dogmatic thought, and popular imagination do not mingle well. The hybrid is sterile. The amount of dogmatic thought, which can be combined with popular imagination and not destroy the distinctive qualities of both, is very small. Dogmatic thought is severe; popular imagination, spontaneous and intuitive. The dogmatic thinker ought to have imagination, but it is distinctly not of the popular sort. The contradiction is inescapable for it inheres in the hypothesis.

The documents, especially Luke's account, are for the

[1] Page 96.

most part touched with poetic grace, set off by a spontaneous, unforced tuneful, lyric quality.

In the midst of a nexus of incidents very simply told, the statement of the virgin birth of the Saviour is placed.

This might be described as the fruit of religious feeling, but Lobstein's attempt to make it also an "explanatory formula" turns upon a single verse, into which he imports an abstract and severe philosophical meaning. This is his explanation of the verse: "The expression 'Son of God' must be taken in its most literal sense, the Holy Ghost is the author of the corporeal and material life of Jesus, the maker of His whole personality; the divine Sonship of Christ implies a communication of the substance of God, it is a physical filiation."

Now I maintain that this interpretation is simply impossible in the light of the context.[1] It reads into the verse the interpreter's own ideas. As a matter of fact, the verse by itself does not necessarily imply a virgin birth at all. It reads thus: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God."

Lobstein claims that the logical connection of the verse would be broken if the divine Sonship of Jesus did not rest according to the angel's declaration, upon the miraculous conception of the holy child in the virgin's womb.

In answer to Mary's question as to how she could become a mother, still being a maiden, it implies that her child was to be born by the power of God, and that alone. But this severe construction, if rigidly applied in connection with the next verse, would carry it altogether too far, for the angel continues, "And behold, Elisabeth thy kins-

[1] On the meaning of the phrase "Son of God," see Briggs' *Messiah of the Gospels*, p. 46. Cf. Luke i, 35 with Psa. ii, 7; and pp. 26, 27, and 89.

woman, she also hath conceived a son in her old age," etc., implying that Elisabeth's child also was miraculous and, so far as the account goes, in the same way, and to the same extent.

It requires no more violence with the texts to imply that the event predicted by the angel was to take place in the regular way after Mary's marriage than to infer that John, though a child of promise, was thus to be born.

Now the context excludes both Lobstein's interpretation and this one, to which logic points with equal force.

In the verse rationally interpreted, there is no definite dogmatic content revealed, whatever may have been in the mind of the angel.

The verse simply implies that Mary's Child is, from the moment of His conception, to occupy a unique relationship to God.

The exact manner of His entrance into the world, and and difference between Him and Elisabeth's child is left to be revealed by after events. The angel's promise would have been fulfilled so far as the necessary implication of the words is concerned, even if Lobstein's theory were correct.

It is clear, then, by analysis, that Lobstein's theory is really the amalgamation of two theories: One, that the narrative was the result of dogmatic thought; the other, that it was the fruit of popular imagination. We may then proceed to consider these two suppositions separately.

First, then, the theory that the Infancy narrative is an attempt in the form of a narrative to solve the problem presented by Jesus to His followers.

The most obvious remark to be made in regard to this contention, that the Infancy story was a phase of Christian thought, is that early Christian thinking did not pass through the course of development demanded by the theory as Lobstein interprets it.

He places this concrete representation of Christ's divine mission and life midway (logically) between the primitive Messianic interpretation of the early disciples, and the fully developed and elaborate Christology of John and Paul. Notice the antecedent condition, out of which this so-called phase of Scriptural Christology issued.

"The Christian consciousness,[1] absolutely convinced of the divine nature of the work and inspiration of Christ," attempted to explain the birth and origin by a greater miracle than any which had presided over the origin of patriarchs and prophets. Here then is the process: The root of it all, an absolute conviction of the divinity of the work and inspiration of Christ; and growing out of it as branches, The Primitive Messianic Interpretation, The Concrete Historical Interpretation, The Johannine Logos Interpretation, the Pauline Ascended Lord Interpretation.

But the absolute unshaken conviction of the Christian consciousness, out of which this whole development is said to have arisen, is itself not a point of departure, but a point of arrival; and long and weary was the way thither. This whole contention of Lobstein's is absolutely demolished by known facts of early Christian thought.

The course of that development, as exhibited in our documents, is as follows: First, a primitive impression of Jesus' greatness in word and work, which led to the thought that He must be the Messiah.[2] There seems to be conclusive evidence that during this period the disciples, on one or two occasions, in moments of rare insight, spoke of Jesus as the Son of God; though this need not be insisted upon. Second, a period of painful suspension of judgment, during which the disciples were utterly unable to reconcile their belief in Jesus' Messiahship and Divinity

[1] Page 71. [2] Mark viii, 29.

with His impending death at the hands of enemies.[1][2] Third, a sudden and great illumination and enlargement of vision due to the Resurrection, and the light shed by it upon the meaning of Christ's death.[3] Fourth, a great burst of missionary zeal, consequent upon the experience of Pentecost, and connected with the Resurrection, during which the Resurrection, reinforced and illustrated by leading events of Christ's life and words connected therewith, was the burden of the preaching and teaching of the apostles and disciples.[4] This period lasted until, fifth, the church expanded beyond the ability of the original messengers of the word to care for it personally in all its parts, when the writing of the Gospels for the use of churches for public reading and catechetical instruction in the absence of the apostles began.[5]

Now in the arrangement of minor details, this outline may be modified, but the general sequence is thoroughly well established. In view of this succession of events, what room is left for a dogmatic process, like the creation of the Infancy narratives, in explanation of an assured consciousness of Christ's divinity midway between the primitive Messianic belief, and the developed Christology of Paul and John?

It is excluded, for, during that whole time, the disciples were struggling to adjust the death of which Christ so constantly spoke, to their belief in His divine mission.[6]

[1] Mark viii, 31 seq.

[2] For early beginning of Christ's foreboding concerning His death, and for statement as to His teaching on the subject see Denney, *Death of Christ*, p. 22.

[3] Acts i, 15. [4] Acts ii. [5] Luke i, 1–4.

[6] Two things are to be noted here: (a) The relative lateness of the time when Jesus drew forth the confession of His Messiahship; *i.e.*, at Cæsarea-Philippi in the later Galilæan ministry, just before the Transfiguration.

b. Immediately upon this confession followed new teaching on the coming death which threw the disciples into perplexity and distress.

Until after the Resurrection, they never reached the position of absolute conviction, out of which the narrative of the Infancy is alleged to have issued.

Lobstein attempts to escape from the chronological puzzle into which his theory leads, by disavowing any chronological implications which may arise, but the attempt is not successful.

The very statement of the theory involves chronological data. This interpretation certainly was not developed after the death of Christ was taken up into Christian theology, and the Christologies of John and Paul were unfolded.

The preliminary section is certainly, as we have seen, an early part of the Gospel record. It never passes beyond the circle of Old Testament ideas and expectations. And yet we are asked to believe, that it is a myth due to the attempt to embody forth an inward conception of the unique exaltation of Christ among men, which demanded some explanation. It must have been composed at a time when certain followers of Jesus had a very clear notion of His unique position among men, for that is the foundation of the myth, and yet did not have under consideration His death and resurrection, for of the doctrinal implication of these no hint appears in the story.

It is undoubtedly true that Christ's followers were impressed from the beginning with the fact that He was different from other men—indeed, we have good reason to suppose that they believed after a fashion that He was the promised Messiah. But this belief was confused, inconsistent, and hard pressed to maintain itself until after the Resurrection. We know that the expansion of Christian belief came very early, and that it was due to the taking up into Christian consciousness of a fact which, until

the Resurrection, remained stubbornly outside; viz., Christ's atoning death.[1]

It is difficult to see how an idea of Jesus' exaltation could have grown to any great proportions without an explanation of the significance of His death. It is equally difficult to see how His death could have been explained without some understanding of its atoning value. It is even more difficult to see how anyone who had attained an understanding of the atoning value of Jesus' death could have kept an idea of such commanding importance out of his writing.

There is, therefore, an accumulation of difficulties involved in the supposition that those who were responsible for the composition of the Gospel of the Infancy could have possessed such an idea of the unique exaltation of Jesus as would impel them to the formation of a myth to explain it. A myth does not grow in an hour.

Are we to suppose that, between the period of confusion in the disciple's mind, which lasted until the death of Jesus, and that clear unfolding of doctrine consequent upon the outpouring at Pentecost, a sufficient time elapsed for the formation of a myth so elaborate as the double Infancy Narrative?

The supposition is inadmissible. The Christian consciousness could not take a single step beyond that primitive attitude of wondering and hesitating faith in Jesus' Messiahship without coming into contact with the unmanageable fact that He was to suffer. There was nothing to do but to struggle with that first until it could be brought into the structure of faith.

Even though, conceivably, we might break through the foregoing difficulties, the troubles into which the theory

[1] For good study of course of events see Rhees: *Life of Jesus*, Section 165, p. 150.

leads us are not yet ended. Indeed, they have but just begun.

The reasonings and conclusions of Lobstein have very little cogency for me, because of one significant omission throughout his entire argument.

From the beginning to the end of his treatise, I find no indication that it ever occurred to him that Hebrew Christians could feel any mental recoil from the idea of a virgin birth.

He expressly excludes the supposition of any dominating heathen influence. He says clearly:[1] "The aversion which primitive Christianity felt for polytheistic paganism was so deep-seated that before supposing the new religion to have been influenced by pagan mythologies, we must examine with the utmost possible care the points of resemblance which are sometimes found to exist between beliefs and institutions."[2][3]

The belief in incarnations and in births by the power of deities was confined to the heathen, and the conceptions of the Deity which made such notions possible were utterly foreign both to the Old Testament and to the Jewish adherents of the Gospel. It is clear from internal evidence that the Gospel of the Infancy proceeded from Jewish Christians of the Old Testament type—separate entirely from heathen influences. That they should have originated the idea of the virgin birth out of Old Testament ideas in which they habitually moved is very hard to believe.[4]

The difficulty is greatly increased by another consider-

[1] See also Gore, *Dissert.*, pp. 55, seq.

[2] Page 76.

[3] Cf. Gore: Incarnation of Son of God—p. 271, note 24—and reference to Kellogg: Light of Asia and Light of the World. Cf. Meyer, Matt. Com. vol. i, p. 67, note.

[4] Neander: Life of Christ, pp. 13 seq. especially 10.

ation still more definite and practical. In Lobstein's exposition, the process of development was very simple and easy. From the strong conviction of Jesus' superiority, even to patriarchs, and lawgivers, and prophets, through the birth marvels attendant upon their entrance into the world, with the assistance of the incorrect translation from Isaiah to the idea that Jesus was Himself the very Son of God by a supernatural generation, the entire process was as easy and natural as the growth of a plant from stem to flower and fruit. But this is a mere scholastic theory, utterly unlike what did or could actually take place. It is perfectly safe to assert that had we no positive evidence in rebuttal of this theory, as to the course of development in the thought of the early church, we would still be in a position to deny on other grounds the possibility of the theory. It fails to take into account the nature of the people who were dealing with the materials of the Gospel story, and the nature of the circumstances under which they were placed.

The most marked characteristic of Christ's disciples and of the people, by whom He was usually surrounded, was their almost unmovable intellectual conservatism.

They were fixed in the traditions of the scribes and the elders. Any novelty of teaching or practice, any departure from the beaten track of traditional interpretation or action, was sure to awaken feelings of fear and disgust. Christ's own disciples moved under His leadership out of the old era into the new with most amazing reluctance and timidity.[1]

To give these men, or their immediate successors, credit for so startling an innovation as the attempt to interpret Christ's divine life by a supernatural generation, is to lay

[1] Take as an example their attitude toward His death, and afterwards their attitude toward the admission of Gentiles.

upon them a task which they were utterly incapable of performing. The panic into which the more conservative brethren were thrown by the liberalism of Paul gives one an indication of the atmosphere of intense conservatism, in which the early Jewish Christians had been trained, and from which they never wholly escaped. It required all the force of the entire Christian revelation, and the lifelong teaching of such a leader as John, to bring men of Jewish blood to the acceptance of the idea of an incarnation at all, and many revolted from it finally, to the loss of Christian fellowship and hope. To these men, the chasm which separates the wonder stories concerning the birth of Isaac and the other Jewish heroes from the story of a divine incarnation by birth from a virgin (a thing different not in degree but in kind) would have been utterly impassable. The men, who hesitated to sit down at meat with Gentiles, lest it be an innovation upon what they had been taught, would have hesitated and stopped a long way this side of the invention of a virgin birth to explain Christ's divine Sonship. Besides, the Gospels were formed and written in an atmosphere of controversy and criticism. During the latter part of Christ's ministry, the early days of the young church after the Resurrection, the entire period of the formation of the canon, the disciples were in the midst of a continual conflict with critics, Jewish and heathen. They were forced to put emphasis upon essentials, to guard every statement, so as not to leave themselves open to misconstruction. They would be loyal to the teachings of the Lord, and to all authentic traditions concerning Him, but they would be certain not to form innovations which might be misconstrued and used against them. In the composition of the Gospels, the writers would be under pressure to scrutinize their materials so as to guard their teaching from error and misinterpretation.

In view of these facts, I fail to see how a floating tradition, without sound authority to recommend it, and even to compel its admittance into the story, could have forced its way into the Gospel. In speaking of the genealogies (and the statement applies equally to all the documents of the Infancy), Lobstein says: "Our evangelists evidently found these genealogies in older documents; then, because of the dearth of traditions current about the childhood of Jesus, they dared not reject any of those which came to their knowledge, but pieced together the little they collected about this obscure subject, of which Jesus Himself had never spoken."[1]

Against this statement is to be urged the well-known fact that the evangelists constantly took the liberty to omit those materials, even well authenticated, which did not suit their purpose, and certainly they would not hesitate to cut out documents of doubtful validity and obscure authorship. Matthew was writing to Hebrews, and was desirous of commending the faith to his countrymen. He knew the Hebrew mind, and understood its prejudices. He must have known that the statement concerning the manner of Christ's birth would come under critical and even unfriendly eyes, and we may be sure that he would have scrutinized the document with exceeding care as to its origin and authority before admitting it into his Gospel. Keim is so sure of this, that he expends the whole force of his criticism in the attempt to cut the document away from Matthew. He may fairly be said to have failed in the attempt, but it is a very good indication that the admission of Matthew's responsibility for the document is fatal to the mythical theory.

It is asking a great deal of our credulity to imagine that the virgin birth was an incident invented to honor Christ,

[1] Page 46.

or to explain His divinity by any Jewish-Christian whomsoever, to say nothing of Matthew.

It is difficult to believe in the crass stupidity involved in the assumption that the incident would result in increased honor to Jesus, or would really convince anybody of His divine nature, who was not already convinced of it on other grounds.

Why should any one have chosen the idea of a virgin birth, in order to make Jesus illustrious, when the authors could hardly have been ignorant that probably the very first use made of the doctrine would be to cast discredit both upon Jesus and upon His mother?

Mysterious circumstances surrounding a man's birth did not then, more than now, serve to accredit him with his contemporaries. Even the heathen, who were very lenient in such matters, were rarely bold enough to attribute dubious ancestry from the gods only one generation back.

Among the Hebrews, birth out of wedlock was looked upon with intense disfavor, and marked the family and the members of it with disgrace. As a matter of painful and disagreeable fact, germane to the discussion, Mary has labored under this charge from the day when her condition first became known to the village gossips of Nazareth until the present.

It is perfectly plain in the Gospel that a storm of venomous detraction burst upon the blameless maiden of Nazareth.

Some writers on the life of Christ think that this was the reason why the family intended to leave Nazareth and remain at Bethlehem. Even Joseph, one of the most magnanimous and princely souls of history, could be brought, only by a divine revelation, to believe in the innocence of the woman whom he had known and loved so well. His reluctance to believe in the possibility of a

virgin birth must have been shared by every person brought into contact with the facts.

The anti-Christian literature of the second century is full of the accusation—a familiar controversial weapon in dealing with Christians.

It is clear also (and this is the most significant fact of all) that Matthew felt this difficulty in all its force, and the form into which he has thrown the account shows that he makes the most careful effort to surround it with every safeguard. This is the explanation, according to my judgment, of his use of the verse from Isaiah vii, 14. He uses it to break the force of the initial prejudice of the Jewish mind against the statement, by suggesting that Messianic prophecy contained a hint of the marvelous occurrence. This also is the reason for the prominence he gives in the account of Joseph. His best argument for the innocence of Mary was that so high-minded and blameless a man as Joseph had made her his wife, and received her into his home.

The unjust charge against her spotless character was a part of her burden, and there can be little doubt that she had a prevision of it, when the event of Jesus' birth was foretold by the angel.

Since Matthew felt keenly that the doctrine was one which might easily be turned against faith in Christ,[1] he must have had some other reason for admitting the statement into his account than a document of doubtful authenticity which had fallen into his hands. The incident must have had the backing of some authority which he

[1] The difference between this explanation of Matthew's attitude and Zahn's elaborate theory (See Das Apostolische Symbolum, p. 58) will appear at once. Zahn supposes the slander to be already in circulation which is unlikely (cf. Machen, Princeton R., Oct., 1905, p. 651). It is not unlikely, however, that Matt. could foresee the likelihood of such slander resulting from the publication of his narrative.

dared not ignore in the formation of his story of Christ's life.

It may not seem necessary to urge, in addition to the foregoing arguments, that the narrative is not dogmatic in any sense, and could not well be the product of the dogmatic temper. The virgin birth is stated merely as a fact of history, in connection with other facts having no particular dogmatic significance. It is not especially emphasized; it is not expounded nor interpreted; nor is it argued in the manner of the dogmatic teacher.

Aside from the sentence attributed to the angel, there is absolutely no hint of any discursive process which is an integral part of all dogmatic thinking, and that verse cannot be pushed very far without breaking it down.

Compared with the elaboration of John's thesis of the preëxistence, and Paul's argument concerning the risen and glorified Christ, or even the implicit process of reasoning concerning the Messiahship of Jesus which underlies the experience of the disciples from Peter's confession at Cæsarea Philippi to His sermon at Pentecost, the amount of dogmatic thinking implied in the Infancy narrative is infinitesimal.

We conclude, therefore, that the explanation of the Infancy stories as a phase of Christian doctrine is inadmissible.

We are still to face the question whether the narrative is myth or actual history.

The admission that the double narrative is poetical in its character, an admission which we may freely make, does not settle the question at issue; for it still remains to be determined whether the facts created the poetry or the poetry the facts.

Are we to look upon the Infancy stories simply as beautiful, religious, legendary poetry—a phase of Christian art—or as the poetical, but essentially truthful representation of facts concerning Christ? There are some

who feel that the question is not a vital one; but, profoundly convinced that permanent religious inspiration is impossible apart from connection with the actual facts of history, I cannot bring myself to feel that the question is unimportant.

It is well to recall, before proceeding further, the exact purpose of Lobstein's theory. It is to preserve the religious value of the narrative, while surrendering its historical character. He wishes the record kept and admired as a phase of early Christian thinking, while it is frankly given up as a statement of fact.

The tendency to hold religious values as something apart from questions of actual fact is very strong in our day. But in the present instance, religious value and actual conformity to the truth of history are inseparable. Close attention to the actual texts will compel us to the conclusion, that in adopting the mythical hypothesis we are doing violence to the writers' conception of their own work. The interpretation of this account as a spontaneous, poetical, religious myth, springing up in minds misty with enthusiasm, and childlike in the inability to distinguish between dreams and reality, unconsciously giving an outward and sensuous expression to an inward experience, will not hold, in view of the careful elaboration which the story has received at the hands of men competent to distinguish between dream and fact, and sufficiently trained to make the acceptance of loose mythical material entirely inexcusable.

There is at the beginning of Luke's Gospel an explicit claim to historic accuracy for the account which follows, and a no less clear and emphatic assertion that it is worthy of credence, because it was received from eye-witnesses and written in order and with care.[1] [2]

[1] Luke i, 1–4.

[2] On Luke's Introduction, see remark of Ewald, quoted by Meyer, Com. on Mark and Luke, vol. ii, p. 273, note.

If it be objected that this claim is made in the prologue, and may not necessarily refer to the document of the Infancy which immediately follows, it is sufficient to refer to the document itself, in which lies the claim, more than once unmistakably made, that the information which is recounted, was received from the only one capable of giving it.[1] [2]

In Matthew's account the same claim is implicitly made, for when he connects the leading incidents of Christ's early life with the prophecies, he really asserts in the most solemn and emphatic manner that they are historically true.[3]

Documents claiming to be historical, but really mythical, can have no religious value for minds with a sound understanding of the meaning and value of history. Facts are too sacred to be juggled with, even in the interests of edification. We can well believe that naïve, poetic expressions of truth have permanent value, but not when they misrepresent actual facts of history. In particular, the religious poetry-theory breaks down at the Herod incident. This obstinately refuses to be harmonized with the explanation. Had this incident been left out, it would have been less difficult to accept the rest of the story as poetry or religious legend without serious loss of beauty or value. But a story, which fastens upon the memory of a human being a crime like the murder of innocent children, must be historic in order to be tolerable. The writer of the account must have believed in the actual occurrence of the incident, and have had good grounds for his belief, or he is stamped as a vilifier of his fellow-men.

[1] Luke ii, 19, 51.

[2] See Ramsay, *Was Christ born at Bethlehem?* chap. iv.

[3] Cf. Bruce: *Apologetics*, p. 456.

It is no answer to say that Herod's name is so covered with infamy that the addition of this charge adds but little to his evil fame. From the ethical point of view, one is not justified in painting even the Devil blacker than he really is.

It is one thing to picture forth a beautiful faith under the imagery of choiring angels and rapt Judæan shepherds and star-led Magi, and quite another to fix a charge of murder for all time, falsely, upon an historic character.

The mythical hypothesis destroys the religious value of the document in which the account is found, and places a serious stain upon the character of those who recorded it.

In looking for evidences of the presence of the historic spirit in these accounts, I shall begin with the incident just spoken of—Herod's murder of the children of Bethlehem.

This story has been most confidently challenged, but with those who deny its historicity, I unhesitatingly take issue.

If internal evidence counts for anything, the incident is historic. In most arguments concerning this incident, the mooted question seems to be whether or not Herod was capable of the savagery involved in such a deed. Keim thinks that the murder of the children was in excess of any other act of his career, and consequently improbable. Others point to the series of murders within his own family as evidence that he would stop at nothing.[1]

The argument ought to be made on broader grounds than these.

Herod the Great was marked by three dominating characteristics, in the intimate blending of which in one composite character of great originality and force, is to be found the explanation of his career:—

[1] Schlosser, *View of Ancient History and Civilization*, vol. iii, p. 261.

1. An imperious and all controlling ambition.[1]

2. A profound subtlety of mind in dealing with men.

3. A ruthless and tigerish temper when once his jealousies and fears were aroused.

Let us look at these in order:—

Herod's ambition was strictly limited by the circumstances of his life. It never soared beyond the purpose of being the true friend and trusted ally of Rome. Within those limits, however, his ambition ruled him body and mind. He held his Judæan kingdom with a grip that could not be shaken loose for a generation after his death. And to keep the favor of Rome, and to maintain his position in his kingdom, no price in blood or treasure was too great to pay. His purpose was as inflexible as fate.

He was gifted, too, in a superlative degree, with Oriental subtlety of mind. He gained his ends by indirection, often without the direct exercise of power. He must indeed have been a master of diplomacy who could have held for thirty-six years the uncertain favor of the successive rulers of Rome, through all the upheavals of that tumultuous transition from the republic to the empire, from Julius Cæsar to Augustus. He had the most turbulent province in the empire to rule over; he was hated by the people; he was surrounded by jealous Roman officials; he had bitter and persistent and powerful enemies, among them Cleopatra, the sorceress of Egypt, and Syllaeus, the Arabian. He was often brought to the verge of ruin, but by his skill and astuteness averted disaster again and again. His unshaken power in a time of upheaval, his steadfast career through storm and whirlwind, remains one of the marvels of history.

[1] See Riggs, *Mac.* and *Roman Periods*, Chap. V., Farrar, *The Herods* and other works on period of Herod, but especially the primal authority Josephus, Anth., Bk 3, XIV, seq. B. J., Bk. I, xl.

His third leading characteristic was utterly unlike the other two, and often in conflict with them. He was not by nature bloodthirsty. That seems to me clear from all his early history. He did not kill for the pleasure of killing; but his ambition was sleepless and jealous. He was of suspicious temper; his fears were easily worked upon, and, when once aroused, he was like a baited beast; he saw all things through a red haze, and struck blindly at friend and foe, repeatedly wounding himself to the very quick. He was as one possessed; his fury was the raging of a madman.

Now, with this in mind, turn to the account of Matthew. There is far more in the story than mere savagery. Indeed the element of savagery has been strangely exaggerated. So far as the number of children involved is concerned, Farrar[1] is probably right in his estimate that no more than twenty children perished. But there is a strange verisimilitude in the record. There is, first, the sleepless watchfulness that brought him into contact with the facts. Of one thing we may be certain, that if there was any talk about a newborn king in circulation, Herod knew about it. He went in disguise among the people to find out what they were talking about, and his spies were everywhere. He would have known, and would have acted with the promptitude attributed to him in the account. Notice also the subtlety with which he dealt with the wise men. No hint of hostile intent was allowed to appear. With a devout demeanor, which none knew better how to assume when it pleased him, Herod asked permission to pay his homage with them at the cradle of the new king. He meant no wholesale murder. He meant to get his hands upon this dangerous infant, and, if he had succeeded, no other children would have suffered. He took the

[1] *Life of Christ*, vol. i, p. 45, note.

method, of which he was so complete a master, to bring about the desired end. And, so far as they were concerned, he was successful. He fooled them completely, and it required a superhuman revelation to avert the catastrophe. Then, when he found that the wise men had eluded him, he was "wroth," the red mist rose again, and he struck blindly through the haze at his unseen foe.

It has been objected that this murder was unnecessary. True, but so also was the murder of Mariamne, and of Alexander, and of Aristobulus, and of scores of others falsely accused. All these executions were futile and unnecessary. They were the acts of a man of fierce temper goaded to madness by jealousies and fears. So also was the murder of the children of Bethlehem.

We gain a little more light upon the incident by comparing it with two others which occurred almost at the same time. Herod had discovered that his favorite son Antipater[1] was plotting against him. Characteristically, his passionate love turned at once to murderous hatred, and he only awaited the opportunity to destroy his unnatural son. Antipater had used Rome as the basis of his operations, and still lingered at the capital. Herod, therefore, sent him a letter, full of fatherly affection, urging him to come home, and hinting at great honors in store for him upon his return. Antipater took the bait, and returned to Palestine, only to be received in disgrace, stripped of all his honors, tried and condemned to death.

At the same time, Herod was sinking to the grave under a complication of disorders that made the few remaining weeks of his life a living torment. In addition to this, he was goaded to desperation by the hatred of the people and the plots against him on every side. He therefore, with a touch of that sardonic humor, which

[1] Jos. Ant., B. 17, IV and V.

never quite deserted him even in *articulo mortis*, sent for the principal men through the country, and shut them up in the race course at Jericho with orders that, at the moment of his death, they should be slain, in order that there might be mourning for him in the nation. This infamous command was not carried out—none the less, it was Herod's purpose. In the light of this incident, any doubt as to the historicity of the murder of the children on the ground of its unnatural savagery seems slightly far-fetched.

Through the entire account, there are so many touches of truth, such comprehensive psychological accuracy, such fitness in all its details with the career of Herod, such appositeness to the circumstances of the time, as to compel one to the conclusion that the author knew whereof he wrote.

The invention of an incident involving the interaction of such peculiar and individual qualities as are exhibited in Herod's dealing with the wise men and the child, by a simple and artless writer but a few years removed from the character in question, lies well over the line of the impossible. If the incident of the massacre of the children has been confidently challenged, the visit of the Magi has been contemptuously dismissed as unworthy of more than passing notice. It is claimed that it has all the marks of legend. But coming to the incident from a study of the related occurrence of the massacre, we have good reason for looking at it rather more favorably.

Many thoughtful and devout men have sought to explain the story of the Magi and the star on natural grounds. These attempts have been unfavorably received on the whole, because all explanations seem to be contradicted by the plain statements of the text. Alford's explanation is based upon the fact that a remarkable conjunction of the

planets, Jupiter and Saturn, in the constellation Pisces occurred three times in the year Seven of our era. Dean Alford states the case from his point of view, thus: "Supposing the Magi to have seen the first of these three conjunctions, they saw it actually 'in the east,' for on the 29th of May it would rise three and a half hours before sunrise. If they then took their journey, and arrived at Jerusalem in a little more than five months (the September conjunction would occur), if they performed the route from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, the December conjunction would be before them in the direction of Bethlehem." [1]

The usual objections made to Alford's explanation may be conveniently expressed in the words of Dr. Gloag: "In all probability, the star was a supernatural phenomenon, as it is apparently so described in the narrative—some meteor divinely formed for the purpose, which, by its movements, guided the wise men to the infant Messiah." But does the account so describe the celestial phenomenon which accompanied the coming of the wise men?

It is not necessary nor wise to deny that they were divinely led to the manger of the newborn King. The Providence which operates unceasingly through all the affairs of the world, and guides the lives of all devout and truthful men, would certainly continue in operation in an event so critical in the history of the world as the birth of Jesus Christ.

It is inherently reasonable that some representatives of the Gentile world should be brought into connection with an occurrence so fraught with significance for them. It is also reasonable to expect that God would use symbols recognized to be sacred among the people to whom He wished to communicate the good tidings. It has been

[1] Grk. Test. *Note on Matt.* ii, 1 and 2.

objected that no motive worthy of Deity is assignable for the use as a means of revelation of "the false opinion of certain Magi concerning the significance of the stars."[1]

The objection cannot stand. If God is to communicate with men at all, He must use a language which they understand, and employ symbols which they recognize as sacred. The argument would apply equally to all use of imperfect media of revelation, even to the use of human language, which is confessedly inadequate to convey divine truth in all its fullness. If the members of this sect, who regulated all the important affairs of life by the stars, were to be brought to Christ at all, it must have been through some such medium as the account describes. A rare and beautiful conjunction of planets, such as the one described as occurring at this time, would infallibly have led the Magi to expect some signal event in the affairs of men.

It is well known that the birth of Christ came just at a time of expectancy. The hope that God would manifest himself in an especial manner was cherished far beyond the borders of Israel. In the East the hope was particularly intense. What more probable, therefore, than the use of the peculiar conditions of the heavenly bodies at that time to work the conviction that God had prepared the special manifestation of Himself for which they had been waiting and longing. Add to this the probability that Jewish writings, widely circulated during the dispersion, had given definiteness of form to the vague and general hopes which the Magi shared with the rest of the world, and we have the historical background of the incident.

While a rational interpretation of the incident must admit the presence of a supernatural element, care should

[1] Ezra Abbott.

be taken to recognize the limits of it. This, it seems to me, has not been sufficiently done. If, as most commentators on both sides of the controversy seem to hold, the star was a purely supernatural manifestation, formed for the purpose of guiding the wise men, it is reasonable to ask: "Why did it not do its appointed work?" When the wise men came to Judæa, they went to Jerusalem, making inquiries as they went. The celestial phenomenon pointed them to Judæa, but it did not lead them to Bethlehem, nor did it indicate where the Babe was. Herod heard of the inquiry; questioned the Jewish scholars as to the probable birthplace of the expected King; and sent the wise men to Bethlehem. It was after the interview with Herod that the star "went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." Is it conceivable that a miraculous star, formed for the purpose of guiding the wise men to the presence of Jesus, would have had to wait until Herod had found out where the Babe was likely to be?

It is evident enough, it would seem, that we have a poetical rendering of the fact that the bright planets, seen from Jerusalem in the direction of Bethlehem, would appear to move as they moved, and would also appear to hover over the house in which the child lay.

A believer in astrology would be certain to say, under such circumstances, that the star went before them and pointed out the way. Matthew's account has every appearance of being taken verbatim from some one who heard the wise men tell their own story. It is colored by their view of the transaction. It could hardly have been originated by a Jew. Moreover, the presence of the historical spirit is indicated by the statement, that the star in and of itself did not lead to the presence of the Babe. A legend-maker would have omitted such a feature as

contradictory in appearance and likely to discredit the entire story, and would have led the wise men directly to the abiding place of the holy family.

It will be noticed that I found no argument upon the certainty of Alford's explanation being correct. I do not know whether the explanation is correct or not. I have no means of knowing. I am simply contending that the objection to it drawn from the text does not hold. According to the account, the star was not necessarily a special creation for the purpose of leading the visitors. It rather makes clear the fact that the wise men were led in accordance with the genius of their own system. Moreover, the historical temper is sufficiently manifest, and the vivid and idiomatic description argues so strongly for nearly first-hand narration, that the hypothesis of a legendary origin fails to account for the story.

When we turn to the account given by Luke, in spite of the fact that it is far more poetical than Matthew's, there are, none the less, many significant touches which indicate that we are dealing with actual historical records cast into poetical forms. Any adequate interpretation of the documents must do equal justice to both these elements—the self-evident truthfulness and the poetic adornment. In order to do this, it is not necessary to suppose that the songs of Mary and Zacharias, and the poetical exclamation spoken by Simeon in the temple, were as a matter of literal fact, spoken off-hand in the elaborate poetic form in which they appear in the third Gospel. This elaborate semi-public declamation of poetry seems to imply a stiff and formal, and almost histrionic, quality in the scenes quite at variance with the spirit of the narrative. It seems to me perfectly clear, that we are to look upon these songs as the literary expression of the thoughts and emotions which filled the minds of persons who had passed through high

and unique experiences, and had meditated upon them in the light of Scripture. They must have been composed by members of a group absolutely dominated by Old Testament conceptions, and stirred to poetical expression by meditation upon God's wonderful dealings with them.

Connecting these after meditations with the events which gave rise to them is not only legitimate in a poetic account, but is an inevitable accompaniment of the literary form. We have at least three precedents in the Old Testament for this treatment of religious experiences in the light of after events. In Isaiah vi, we have, as a prologue to the prophet's career, a narrative of his call and consecration, which could have been written only after a long series of experiences had opened up to him the meaning of his life, and of God's dealings with him from the beginning.[1] In Jeremiah xxxii, 6–8, we have a clear exposition of the interpretation which after events give to experiences previously imperfectly understood. He says after the events occurred: "Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord." In Hosea i, according to the usual modern interpretation, the command said to have been issued to the prophet to marry a woman of evil life, which has given so much trouble to commentators, is to be understood as a reading of earlier experiences in the light of after events. These three instances are exactly parallel with the interpretation which we are giving of the songs in Luke.

It is a literary device which is necessary to any well-told historical account, and involves no juggling with essential facts. It simply makes explicit, for purposes of interpretation, what was implicit in the experience itself.[2]

That in the present instance the literary form was not due to Luke or to any other writer of Gentile antecedents,

[1] See G. A. Smith, Isa., vol. i, p. 57.

[2] It is clear also from the absence of all references to Jesus' death that the time of composition was not long subsequent to the events recorded.

and is therefore very close to first-hand narrative, is easily demonstrable. The songs in the Gospels are in almost every line echoes of the Old Testament.[1] That Luke himself was incapable of creating poems with this minute assonance with the Old Testament surely needs no comment.

If this is a reasonable explanation of the songs in Luke, the question now arises how much farther are we to carry the same mode of exposition. We wish to maintain a fair balance between the historic essence and the poetic form. We wish, on the one hand, to be just to the self-evident and vivid truthfulness of the account, and, on the other, to do equal justice to the literary qualities which are no less marked and striking. How, then, are the annunciations and dreams to be interpreted,—as literal fact or poetic drapery? At the outset, it is to be noted that the separate accounts differ consistently in the method of the divine revelation. In Luke's account, the divine word is invariably through annunciation.[2] In Matthew the same result is attained through dreams.[3]

Does this consistently-maintained difference imply that God manifested Himself invariably in one way to Mary and in another to Joseph? Or does it imply that the difference is due to the fact that in each case we have an attempt to interpret a transcendent experience, which could be made intelligible to other minds only under some such form of treatment?[4]

[1] Cf. Luke i, 46–55, with I Sam. ii, 1–10; Luke i, 68–79, with Ps. lxii, 17, 18 and C. 48; lxxx, 14, 15; Luke i, 76 with Isa. xl, 3–5; Luke i, 78 with Isa. ix, 2; Luke ii, 32 with Gen. xii, 1–3; Isa. xlix, 6.

[2] Luke i, 11, 26; ii, 9.

[3] Matt. i, 20; ii, 12, 19, 22.

[4] Dr. Briggs (*Messiah of the Gospels*, pp. 49 f,) holds that the conception of Jesus took place in a theophany, for, as he urges, "it not only represents that the divine power covered her with a shadow, but this is to be thought

There are certain facts to be explained, and the narratives as they stand explain them. Granted that the events took place at all, some supernatural machinery was necessary to account for them. Why did the Magi come to Judæa just at that time? The answer to this is comparatively simple up to a certain point. A rare combination of planets convinced a group of astrologers, who had read the Hebrew Scriptures and were looking for a great ruler to appear among the Jews, that the time had come. Their expectations led them to Judæa, and then by inquiry they were led to Bethlehem. But, having reached Bethlehem and seen the child, how did they know that this humble babe was the promised King? There is an irreducible element of immediate revelation involved in the very necessities of the case.

of after the uniform usage of Scripture as a bright cloud of glory, hovering over her, resting upon her or enveloping her with a halo of divinity, in the moment when the divine energy enabled her to conceive the child Jesus," and in a note he says: "The same verb, ἐπισκιάζω, is used in the lxx of Exodus xl, 35, with reference to the cloud of glory of the tabernacle, and also to the theophanic cloud of the Transfiguration in Matthew xiii, 5; Mark ix, 7; Luke ix, 34. The cloud of glory is always connected with God, and implies more than the agency of the divine spirit."

So far as the language is concerned, this is undoubtedly correct, but it is to be remembered that the words occur in the highly-poetized message of the angel previous to the conception, and not in the historical statement of what actually occurred. The statement, therefore, does not justify us in asserting anything more, than that the narrative of the announcement made to Mary concerning the mysterious experience which was to befall her took the familiar Old Testament form. How otherwise could it more appropriately be expressed? To affirm that there was anything physically visible in her experience seems to me at once dangerous and beyond Scripture. I fail to discover any adequate basis for the opinion, held in common by Keim and Briggs, that Luke intends to depict the great mystery in a sensuous way. The words upon which this opinion is based are poetical, and are a part of the literary form. They should be interpreted, in harmony with the chaste reserve which marks the rest of Luke's account, as hinting at, but not disclosing, the facts.

Take up the incident of the shepherds and the same necessity appears. How did they know that the Messiah was born that night and in Bethlehem, and that by going thither they should be able to find him? It is necessary to postulate some experience which gave them (1) an intimation of the sacred birth, and (2) definite directions as to the place where He might be found. There is a striking touch of the unexpected in the account as it stands. The sign offered by the angel was: "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Nothing could be imagined more remote from ordinary Jewish expectations than the condition and circumstances of the holy Child.[1] His helplessness and assimilation to ordinary human conditions were accentuated by the mention of the bands, and His extreme humiliation by His place in the manger. It would seem that nothing less than a deputation of angels would be sufficient to authenticate so strange a sign to men of Jewish thought and feeling. In addition to this, some one with authority must have told them that they had found the actual babe they sought. There may have been several babies born in overcrowded Bethlehem that night, and more than one mother may have been obliged to lay her child in the straw. But even now we are only at the beginning of the problem. In order to account for the assurance reached by the shepherds and Magi, that they had found the child for whom they sought, it is necessary to postulate a knowledge on the part of Joseph and Mary that Mary's child was the King sought by the visitors. And Mary herself must have been made aware of the fact that she was to become the virgin mother of the Messiah. The occurrence of such an event without clear previous announcement would be certain to eventuate in the madness of the subject.

[1] Cf. Edersheim L. J. M., vol. i, p. 186.

In the case of Joseph, also, it is perfectly evident that he must have been prepared for the historic task of guarding the mother and the child. Matthew's narrative that Joseph was kept by a supernatural revelation from repudiating his betrothed is strictly in accordance with the necessities of the case. The consistent representations in both accounts that the persons involved in this wonderful cycle of events were profoundly agitated by the information brought to them is also psychologically correct. Joseph must have been convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that the event of Jesus' birth was supernatural, or else the lower inference concerning it would have been inevitable. Under whatever form the revelation was made, it must have come with such unmistakable clearness and cogent force as to drive away the last shadow of misgiving from his mind. An ordinary dream on such a subject would seem to require some additional support. The dream must have been of such a nature—so entirely out of the ordinary—as to authenticate itself.

In other words, looking at the narrative as a whole, it is clear that if the miraculous birth occurred at all, it must have been accompanied by incidents equivalent to those recorded in the text. The influence said to have been exercised upon the minds of Joseph and Mary by angels and dreams was absolutely essential, or the whole connection of events would have issued in confusion and disaster. There is an interior logical consistency in the accounts as they stand which compels us to affirm, that if the event happened at all, it must have happened in some such way. Moreover, if we throw the entire story out of court as poetic mythology, we have lessened the difficulty, but we have not removed it. For even if the Magi and shepherds never came, and Jesus was derived in the ordinary way from Joseph and Mary, we are still face to face with the

necessity of postulating some special information to the parents as to the prospects of their child, in order that He might be guarded and prepared for His task, or else of believing that He was not designated from the beginning for His task, but was chosen in middle life, suddenly and without previous warning.

This latter supposition is contradicted by incidental references in Scripture, is false to all that we know of human psychology, which affirms that a man's life is a unit throughout, and gives to the Messianic career of Jesus an artificial and revolutionary character which is very revolting as well as unnatural. As a matter of fact, in view of the mature life of Jesus and His career as Messiah, we are shut up to one of two conclusions. Either there was no sacred childhood and youth, and the beginnings of Jesus' life have no vital connection with His public career, or else the incidents of His childhood and youth must have been something very like those recorded in the narratives under review.

In view of all the facts, therefore, it would seem that either one of two essentially related convictions is reasonably tenable. We may hold that the events occurred literally as they are told, and that the account is poetical only in the form of words used. On the other hand, we may believe, without surrender of the vital point at issue, that the dreams and annunciations, and other machinery of revelation form the poetic accessories and literary draping of experiences so transcendent that the subjects of them could not relate them intelligibly to others, except under the forms hallowed by usage and familiar to those acquainted with the narrative of the old covenant.[1]

Either of these conclusions is easier and more rational than the surrender of the essential historicity of the

[1] Cf. Gore : *Dissertations*, p, 21.

accounts. The revelation of God's purpose to the human servants who were called, in circumstances of trial and difficulty, to aid in carrying it out is the essential thing—the form of that revelation is a purely secondary matter.[1]

Every consideration to prove that the central event did happen adds force to the conclusion, that the account is correct and historic in essence, though poetical in form. In favor of this interpretation of the record, I urge three specifications: First, the absolute congruity between the spirit and expression of the Infancy section with the known beliefs and feelings of those from whom it purports to be derived. We have already seen that the character of the document points to a very early origin. It moves within a range of Messianic ideas very soon outgrown by the disciples. But this peculiarity is an indication not only of date, but also evidence of great value as to the sources of the document.

The decidedly Aramaic cast of the Greek in the narrative of Luke has often been noticed, and various attempts have been made to account for it. But two explanations, however, seem really to be open to us. Either the idiom was due to the document of the Infancy, which Luke incorporated into his account, or to his effort to preserve the spirit and color of an oral account which he had heard either from Mary, or from some one to whom Mary had given it.

Professor Ramsay has argued with considerable cogency for the second of these two explanations.[2] Professor Briggs advocates the other view.[3] I am not disposed to quarrel with either supposition, for in either case we have Luke's attempt to preserve in his Greek the spirit of that which had been transmitted to him, either orally or in

[1] Cf. note on Dr. Briggs, above p. 131 u.

[2] *Was Christ born at Bethlehem?* pp. 80, seq.

[3] See statement quoted on, p. 99.

writing, from those who were in a position to know about the circumstances of Jesus' birth.

There can be little question that in the time of Jesus, amid all the warring sects into which Judaism had split up, there were many individuals who had preserved the spirit of Old Testament Judaism, and were consequently identified with none of the sects. Of these Simeon and Anna, Zacharias and Elisabeth, Joseph and Mary, and John the Baptist were examples.

Of the thoughts and feelings, the hopes and aspirations, of this group, the psalms and conversations and ideas of Luke's version are the exact and wonderful expression. The psalms were the utterances of Jewish hearts touched to jubilation by the accomplished fulfillment of long cherished hopes, finding utterance in forms natural to believers grouped about the cradle of the infant Messiah in the glad days before the dark shadow of rejection had dimmed their joy; but utterly impossible afterwards. The only touch of sadness is in the sentence of Simeon, and that is so vague as to show that it is merely the foreboding of one who had caught more clearly than most, the truth that the Messianic career was not to be one unbroken triumph.

The document, as a whole, could not have been composed after the Crucifixion, nor even after Jesus had begun His lessons to the disciples on the cross. It is too care-free, too jubilant, too undisciplined, too free from perplexity. It moves entirely within the sphere of Old Testament ideas, and is intensely Hebraic both in the range and in the quality of its thought and feeling. All this is significant. Taking into consideration Luke's nationality and history, his mode of understanding and interpreting the Gospel as shown in his other writings, the conclusion seems to me inevitable not only that Luke could not have

invented the story, but that he could not have obtained it except through personal relationship with some one who belonged to the group of whose faith and emotion it was the characteristic and inimitable expression. No Gentile coming to the story of Christ's life through the preaching of the apostle Paul could have been brought to accept a tradition or document of a nature so utterly foreign to his own favorite modes of thought and interpretation, without the influence of some person of authority who could enable him to see the historic bond of unity between notions so primitive and Hebraic, and the expanded universal Christianity of which he himself with Paul was the exponent and advocate. In other words, we are compelled, by the minute accuracy of the description of a very peculiar and individual phase of early Hebrew-Christian thought, to the belief that the writer, who was a Gentile not over skillful in Hebrew matters, had a very close and intimate fellowship with the group with which the story is concerned.

The second specification, which I urge in favor of the view that we are here dealing with actual history and not legend, lies in the evident constraint of mind under which the account is written. I mean the profound reverence and careful reserve with which the writer deals with the incidents and persons of his narrative. Those who maintain the hypothesis which we are now contesting hold that the Infancy narrative in the Gospels is an irregular and unauthorized addition to the evangelical tradition, created under the influence of the mythic or legendary temper, imagining incidents in an obscure and little understood part of Christ's life of which He Himself never spoke. It happens that in the Apocryphal books of the New Testament, we have undoubted and unquestioned specimens of this kind of work.

We know that these writings have originated in the same way that the Gospel narratives must have originated, if this hypothesis is correct. It is fair to ask, whether there is such kinship between the two sets of documents as to indicate a similarity in the condition from which they issued.

Keim[1] has exerted his skill to the utmost to exhibit resemblances between the two sets of narratives concerning the Infancy, but his comparison leaves untouched the fundamental world-wide difference which separates them. And this difference is not a matter of literary workmanship or artistic finish, but lies wholly in the region of moral moods and ideas. The Apocryphal stories are many of them childish and silly, but they are worse than this—they are fundamentally irreverent. They fumble with coarse fingers and unwashen hands, with sacrilegious and repulsive intimacy of detail, with the sacred mystery. I need not specify; the text is within reach of my hand as I write, and every reader of it is familiar with the facts which I urge.

In contrast with this clumsy and coarse irreverence, Luke's restraint and delicacy are both beautiful and wonderful. He handles with unerring nicety of touch a story which one false note or faintest suggestion of coarseness would utterly destroy. He is silent where unrestrained fancy would be most active in picturing. He draws the outline so that the great central fact stands forth bright and clear, but refrains from filling in with details which curiosity would like to know. Let the advocates of the legendary hypothesis explain this difference between the Apocryphal and Gospel narratives, for explained it must be before any balanced mind ought to be able to accept the theory of a common origin for the two.

[1] L. J. N. vol. ii, pp. 46, seq. See quotations above p. 59.

I am satisfied that it can be explained, but not in harmony with this theory. I am profoundly convinced that the irreverence which mars the Apocryphal stories was due to a surrender of the obligation of truthfulness. The writers were tampering with facts which ought to have been absolutely sacred; in yielding the obligation of truth to the spirit of inquisitiveness, the mind lost its tone, became blunted in its spiritual perceptions, and naturally puerile and irreverent in its imaginings.

Luke's account shows the noble constraint of one who knows the truth and holds it sacred, and is, by the truth, made free from the lower workings of his own mind.[1] I am persuaded by the whole moral tone of the story, its restraint and delicacy, its sublime purity, that it came by no very indirect course from the mother herself.

I urge in conclusion, as evidence of the presence and working of the historic temper in this account, the definite dating of the occurrence given in the first verses of the second chapter. Here we are upon debatable ground. Many scholars maintain that this statement of Luke's is a colossal blunder, and a demonstration that Luke was not a true historian.[2] On this subject, no scholar can afford to ignore the work of New Testament scholars in this field, particularly Prof. Ramsay. The latter, with the skill and patience of the scholar born and trained, has gone through Luke's work, and exhibited in detail his mastery of facts and materials in connection with the Roman Empire. The general issue of his works as regards Luke's position as

[1] Cf. sentence of Fairbairn concerning the miraculous in the Gospel: "Is it too bold an inference to argue that the very magnitude of their subject had superseded in the Evangelists the creative activity of the morbid and mythical imagination?" Phil. Chr. Rel., p. 337.

[2] On this see Plummer, Com. on Luke, ii, 2; also Meyer, Com. on Mark and Luke, vol. ii, p. 323; also Cam. Bible for Schools, Luke, p. 62, note.

a historian is not doubtful, and whatever Prof. Ramsay has to say about Luke is to be heard with respect. He has written an elaborate treatise[1] in explanation of the account given of the enrollment which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.

Whether his argument is valid in every particular, I am not competent to judge. The argument is intricate and complicated, and depends upon a vast amount of careful adjustment. This much, however, he has done—he has brought the discussion into a new phase. Luke must henceforth be listened to with thoughtful regard. It is no foregone conclusion that he has blundered in statements concerning the methods of Roman administration. I shall make very modest requisition upon Professor Ramsay's work. I simply wish to take this ground, which is certainly reasonable:[2] "It is quite justifiable and reasonable, in a period of history so obscure as the first century, to plead, as many have done, that, while we cannot in the present dearth of information solve the difficulty completely, we are obliged, in accordance with our perception of the high quality of the author's work as a whole, to accept his statement in certain cases where he is entirely uncorroborated."

While I do not claim that the passage in question proves that Luke was a great historian, for its accuracy is disputed,[3] I do claim that it proves that Luke was not of the legendary temper. His whole purpose in the Gospel and the Acts was to relate the history of Christ and early Christianity to its Roman setting. The purpose is utterly foreign to the legendary mood. Vagueness of date and localization is characteristic of all mythical productions.

[1] *Was Christ born at Bethlehem?*

[2] *Ibid*, p. 7.

[3] See note C at end of volume—Prof. Ramsay's Argument.

The definite dating of the incident, with the names of historic characters connected therewith, is proof that Luke tried at least to write history, and the general character of his work is demonstration enough that on the whole he was successful.

In general, therefore, we conclude that Lobstein's elaborate and ingenious theory breaks to pieces on the facts; that the Protevangel is neither dogma nor legend, but history, authentic in its origin, and well and soberly narrated, although in the forms of sacred poetry.

CHAPTER VI

THE THEORY OF HEATHEN INFLUENCE

It would be appropriate to place at the head of this chapter the words of Lobstein elsewhere quoted,[1] in which he definitely rejects Soltau's elaborate attempt to account for the Infancy narratives on the basis of heathen influence, or the words of Harnack in which he takes the same position.[2] It would seem as if no really close student of the Gospel narratives, occupying a position of genuine sympathy, and approaching the subject from within, could imagine for a moment, that heathen analogies have had the slightest influence in molding the twofold story of the Saviour's birth and infancy, as we now have it.

We have elsewhere incidentally made answer to certain aspects of this theory, but since the assertion has taken so many different forms, and has lately reappeared in new dress, we now devote some pages to a discussion of the question of heathen influence in general upon the Infancy documents.

Before taking up the specific points of evidence, it is necessary to indicate certain general principles which must govern any adequate discussion of the problem. It is taken for granted, as abundantly proved in the preceding pages, that the literary sources of the two narratives in Matthew and Luke were composed by Jewish-Christians. It is not necessary to repeat the arguments here;

[1] See page 112.

[2] *History of Dogma*, Eng. Trans., vol. i, p. 100.

the conclusion rests upon undeniable features of the narratives themselves.[1]

This, of course, does not prove that the main incident narrated therein was not due to the invention of a non-Jewish Christian, although the nature of the documents in which the statement is found reduces the probability of that to very small dimensions. But, however the statement originated, it was passed upon, accepted, and formulated, by Jewish Christians. If it was of heathen origin, we have an undoubted instance of a heathen notion passing the barriers of race, beating down the guard of national prejudice, and becoming domesticated in Jewish minds. It is, of course, perfectly true that this would by no means be without a parallel in history. All extreme theories aside, it is acknowledged that there were Jews, even after the captivity had solidified the bulk of the nation into intense loyalty to their own religion and social customs and no less intense hatred of Gentiles, who were susceptible to foreign influence, and inclined to adopt foreign ways. There were periods, notably that just preceding the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, when the influence of Hellenism seemed to be gradually permeating the Jewish people.[2] The cruel and tyrannical methods of Antiochus brought about not only a political revolution, in which foreign power was banished for a century from Jewish soil, a century during which

[1] So admitted by most writers on the subject—Lobstein, Keim, Harnack, Cheyne, etc.

[2] See for a discussion of this subject, Rappoport's continuation of Maspero's Hist. Egypt, vol. x, cap i. Cf. Schürer, J. P. T. C., First Division i, pp. 194, f. For a brief but accurate and sane discussion of relationship between foreign religions and Judaism, see Kent: Bab. Per. and Greek Periods in History of Jewish People Series, pt. ii, cap. xiii and xiv; also for Jewish reaction against Hellenism, p. iii, cap. iii–vi. See also for contination of this struggle, Riggs, Mac. and Rom. Period, pt. i, cap. ii and iii. (See also literature in these books.)

decaying Hellenism was gradually giving way before the advance of Rome, but also a social revulsion, which to a large extent broke the power of Hellenistic ideas and customs over Hebrew minds. The vast majority of the nation was a unit against all foreign influence—the Jewish inhabitants of large towns and cities in Palestine and Syria were wholly separate from their heathen neighbors; in foreign cities they also formed communities by themselves. They hated the heathen, and were cordially hated by them in return. Social intercourse, and even business relations were established only under great restrictions. One has but to read the writings of the period to feel how intense was the hatred with which the Jews as a whole regarded the heathen, with whom circumstances had brought them into most unwelcome contact.[1] [2] It is necessary simply to recall, for a most conspicuous example, the undying hatred, of which Herod the Great was the object, principally because he was a foreigner. No nation can be altogether impervious to social influences from foreign nations, but the Jewish nation came nearer being such than almost any other except, perhaps, the Egyptian, known to history.

But there were always some who were sympathetic toward foreigners and accessible to foreign influence. Even Herod had Jewish adherents. The most remarkable instance known of heathen influence over Jewish minds is exhibited in that mysterious and un-Jewish sect, the Essenes. Their system seems to have been an eclectic compound of Pharasaic Judaism, Pythagoreanism, and Parsee sun-worship. As to how they came into exist-

[1] Cf. *e. g.* the remarks of Bissell: Gen. Intro. to Lange's Com. on Apoc. (1901), p. 49.

[2] On relations of Jews and Gentiles in Palestine, see Edersheim, L. and T. J. M., chap. vii, espccially end of chapter. Cf. also Com. Apoc. (Lange's), pp. 436, ff.

ence, there is no conclusive evidence, but they formed a large party in the land. They were cut off from the Jews, excluded from the temple, and the recipients of a generous share of the hatred bestowed by the Jews upon the heathen. Looking now at the phenomena presented by the Essenes, and indeed at the entire history of Hellenism on Jewish soil, certain facts emerge with great distinctness.

Amalgamation between heathen and Jewish notions, in the minds either of heathens or Jews, was possible only through essential modification of both elements in the combination. A union between unchanged Hebraism and unmitigated heathenism was impossible. There must be, first, a movement from both sides toward a common center before any union could take place. In so far as a Jew adopted heathen customs and ideas, he ceased, in the strict sense, to be a Jew. To a Hebrew, brought up in the strict fashion of his fathers, taught in the way of the nation, any adoption of heathen ways was an abomination. The Jew must become modified by long contact with the heathen, as in the Dispersion, and, also, it would seem, by a breaking down of inward principles, before any adoption of heathen ideas would be possible.

Moreover, there were, historically, movement and change on the other side. Heathenism underwent tremendous modifications in the centuries immediately before Christ. The popular myths had been largely abandoned before the Jews became Hellenized to any extent. Abstract philosophies had taken the place of crude natural mythologies. Heathenism invaded the life of the Jew, not in its ancient form, but in the social customs, dress, literature, and philosophies of modernized Greeks, and their imitators, the cosmopolitan politicians and soldiers of Rome.

Philo, in whose philosophical system Hellenism and

Hebraism were united, was certainly not an orthodox Jew of the older fashion, but he certainly did not accept the crude ancient myths of the heathen. He interpreted Old Testament history allegorically in the terms of Greek philosophy. He was a modified Jew influenced by a modified heathenism.

The Essenes were not Jews except in blood, many of the distinctive and cardinal Jewish ideas of their day they rejected, but, even so, they did not accept the ancient mythologies, by which they were influenced, unchanged. They seemed to have taken into their system revived Pythagoreanism, such as we find in the communities of Alexandria, with its ascetic cenobitism, and hatred of blood sacrifice, and combined it with eastern mysticism and sun-worship, the latter in all probability purged from much that was historically connected with it. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that it would be vain to search history for an instance of a devout Jew of the unmodified Old Testament type, loyal to the traditions of the past, and steadfast in adherence to the principles for which Israel had always stood, who at the same time admitted heathen ideas into his thought, and heathen customs into his life. He must in large measure lose his distinctive Jewish characteristics, and even then could accept heathen notions only after they had been greatly changed and elevated.

In addition to this law of development, another principle clearly emerges in the history of the relationship between heathenism and Judaism. This principle is that in order for amalgamation between the two forms of faith to take place, there must be more than one point of contact. No single unrelated heathen notion would be likely to appear in Hebrew writings. The admission of heathen elements into a Jew's system of belief would result in the radical modification of the tone and atmosphere of his thought

The admission of a single important heathen conception would change the entire contents of the mind.

And, moreover, ideas come, not singly, but in groups. One idea involves another, and every fundamental notion really involves a special point of view from which all things appear in a particular light. Nothing in the world could appear just the same to a man who had shifted in the slightest degree from the Jewish to the heathen point of view. The operation of this law of mind is clearly exhibited in the case of the Essenes. The composite nature of their system is clearly discerned under analysis. Their Jewish affinities were shown in their passion for ceremonial purity, their Pythagorean tendencies by their attitude toward animal sacrifice, their sun-worship by their prayers to the sun to rise and their adoration of him on his rising, their asceticism by their attitude toward marriage, their connection with the Alexandrian sects by their settlement in monastic communities, their relationship to oriental systems by the rigid division into Brahman-like castes or orders within their organization. Taking any one of these ruling ideas it will be seen that it leads to other related ideas, and is one element in a system both of thought and of life. The Essenes represent an eclecticism of related ideas taken from various sources, but held together by inherent affinities into a more or less coherent system. No one item of any one of the systems which were combined in their elaborate and intricate mode of thought and life was adopted to the exclusion of all others. They were Jewish in several points, Pythagorean in some particulars, Parsee in not a few items. They evidently adopted certain leading ideas from all these systems, and were guided by a sure instinct to allied principles. There is a common ground to all the apparently unrelated and motley items of their system. Their fundamental implicit principle was

the inherent impurity of matter, and with this their sun-worship, their frequent lustrations, their white robes, their spades or picks with which to cover up all that would offend the purity of the sun, their abstention from marriage, their separate orders, their communal monastic organization all agree.[1]

Their system represents the natural history of all such attempts to import ideas from one faith to another. Systems of faith which involve ideas of God, philosophies of the world, ceremonial rites hang together and form systems —they are to a certain extent interdependent and consistent. Men who combine religion may begin with one idea, but inevitably find themselves in the coil of a system.

Now, with these two principles in view, let us turn to the Infancy narrative. We are told that the chief incident therein narrated is due to the influence of heathen analogies, and that the statement was framed in accordance with the stories of the birth of mythical heroes from the gods. It seems impossible that those who hold this view realize clearly the logical implications of their statements. For it means that positively the most unsavory element in the ancient mythology was taken over bodily into Christianity, wrought into the fabric of the New Testament, incorporated in the historic creeds, and made a permanent element of Christian faith. It means that this disreputable rag of ancient heathenism, the one element most completely discredited by the advance of enlightenment among the heathen themselves, rejected and covered with scorn by the philosophers, ridiculed in the theaters amid the laughter

[1] Conybeare (H. B. D., vol. i, p. 769, Art. Essene) refers to the attitude of the Essenes toward marriage to a desire for Levitical purity, and cites the Mosaic law of purification. If he means to imply that the motive of that law was an ascetic notion of the inherent uncleanness of the sexual relation, I differ emphatically. The law in question was sanitary rather than philosophic.

of the mob, was adopted by Christians and made a part of their testimony to their Lord. If the miraculous birth is a heathen notion, it involves that degrading conception of a Deity holding intimate physical relations with human beings which is the very essence of heathen idolatry, the object of Jewish hatred and scorn since the days of the prophets. If the virgin birth is a borrowed heathen notion, it involves nothing less than absolute apostasy on the part of those who formulated and accepted it. None but a renegade Jew, false to the faith of his fathers, and infected with the virus of the lowest heathenism, could have been guilty of such an invention.

The adoption of the categories of heathen philosophy, such as we find in Philo, and even the rites of sun-worship, which we see among the Essenes, are matters of trifling moment, compared with the moral lapse into coarse heathenism involved in the story of Christ's birth thus interpreted.[1]

But the bald statement of the logical content of this affirmation concerning the virgin birth brings us face to face with a tremendous difficulty. We find this imported heathen notion imbedded in a narrative of the most intensely Jewish character. I do not urge against the theory, as I reasonably might, the moral sublimity of the narrative, the unique combination of simplicity and grandeur which lifts the story into a place by itself, a whole heaven above all the stories that heathenism in its best days ever produced, but simply the Jewish character of the narrative. The story in both its forms stands close to the Old Testament. It is Hebraic rather than Judaic. It is combined with prophecy in Matthew, and with songs, which are but glorified Old Testament psalms, in Luke.

[1] For a clear exhibition of the mental and moral atmosphere in which such myths flourish, see Curtiss's Primitive Semitic Religion To-day (Revell, 1902) Chap. IX. It is not pleasant reading, but will be a good tonic for those who are inclined to this theory.

Here is the appropriate place to emphasize the fact, incidentally stated elsewhere, that these songs are vitally connected with the miraculous birth. Soltau says of the early document embodied in the narrative, of which the songs are a part: "It described in a genuinely Jewish way the joy manifested by the oldest generation when the Messiah appeared." But the exuberant, heart-swelling joy which rings in those incomparable lyrics, was based upon belief in a signal interference of God in human history for the salvation of His people, comparable with the deliverance from Egypt, or the destruction of Sennacherib. It was based upon the appearance of one who was announced, manifested, certified as the Messiah from the very beginning of His life. It could not be based upon the birth of a child unaccompanied by divine warrant and announcement from heaven of the dignity of His person and mission. Those songs could not have reflected the feelings of the first generation concerning the appearance of the Messiah had they not known, by positive authority, that He whom they welcomed was actually the Messiah. The songs can be accounted for only by reference to the facts with which they are bound up in the narrative; namely, the wonders accompanying and designating the Messiah's birth.

But, aside from this, the document embodied in the narrative could have been written by genuine Hebrews only. The writers were men whose minds were permeated with the spirit as well as the language and style of their sacred books; who were in love with the past of their nation; who shared its hopes and ideals, and were filled with joy, because, in the birth of Jesus, their national longing was fulfilled. If the hypothesis which we are criticising is correct, we have here a flagrant violation of the principles which we have seen in operation through

the entire history of Hellenism in contact with the Hebrews. We have the unnatural and impossible coalition of unmodified Hebraism, and unchanged heathenism. We have Jews of the highest type adopting mythological notions most vulgar and debased.

In addition, there is a clear violation of the second principle. If the virgin birth is a heathen notion, it stands alone of its kind, not only in the Infancy narrative, but also in the New Testament. It has been claimed, and strongly rebutted, that there are heathen elements in the New Testament; but no one, so far as I know, makes the claim that there is in the New Testament any trace of mythological notions so vulgar and debased as is to be found in this statement interpreted as an adoption from heathenism. Those who adopted this heathen myth, by a strange mental caprice, kept their Jewish idea of the spirituality and unity and exaltation of God. They were worlds apart from the heathen attitude of mind, save in this one particular. The theory, therefore, as ordinarily stated, logically involves the violation of laws of general force, and wide application in the actual history of the process of religious amalgamation. The theory exhibits an impossibility; namely, a genuine Jew, filled with the spirit of his race, lending himself to the adoption of a vulgar heathen notion, which really involves a total change of belief concerning the nature of God, and stopping short just at that point. The adoption of this theory for the explanation of the Infancy story demands a greater credulity than most of us have to spare on a single point.

In view of these considerations, the multiplication of heathen analogies[1] to the miraculous birth has no great force to a discerning mind.

[1] Such as those collected in Hartland's *Legend of Perseus*, vol. i, and by Usener in *Ency. Biblica*, Art. Nativity.

Any close and thoughtful study of the documents in the light of history leads to the conclusion reached by Prof. Sanday, that those who reject the Infancy narrative because of incidental resemblances to heathen myths[1] "do not sufficiently consider the entire difference of the conditions under which the Christian tradition was promulgated from those which surrounded the creations of mythopœic fancy. The Christian tradition belongs to the sphere, not of myth, but of history. It is enshrined in documents near in date to the facts, and in which the line of connection between the record and the fact is still traceable."

We may, therefore, unhesitatingly reject as impossible the theory that the Gospel story of the miraculous birth was due to the influence of popular heathen myths.

The whole question, however, of heathen influence upon the Gospel story is of broader application and of more vital import than thus far appears.

It touches not merely upon incidental details of the narrative, but upon the central affirmation of Christian faith; namely, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

It is startling at first to discover that incarnation, the appearance of Deity in material, and especially in human form, is not only a feature, but the central feature, of almost every great historic religion. It is the common feature of systems otherwise widely divergent. "Pagan theophany is one of the most interesting and significant of studies that a reverent soul can pursue. And the most significant fact in connection with the study is the universality of the belief in the incarnation of the Deity. It is one of those "always, everywhere, and by everybody," beliefs that have the highest authority that can possibly be given to a religious conception—the authority of a

[1] H. B. D., vol. ii, p. 647 a, Art. Jesus Christ.

universal spiritual conviction. That God must reveal Himself to His creatures, that this revelation must take visible form, that the presence of the Deity in the object or being that embodies Him gives superhuman worth and power, and demands from men reverence and worship, is the conviction that underlies all religious forms and ceremonies. It does not detract from the significance of the fact, that many supposed incarnations are absurd, and many low and base. That is the fault, not of man's spiritual intuition, but of his intellectual and moral degeneracy. He believes in a God higher and holier than himself, whose embodiment in the most abject form renders it sacred and superior to himself. The fetich of the savage African, the idols of the heathen, the demigods of pagan Greece and Rome, the composite creatures of ancient Assyria, all witness to the belief of man in the possibility and fact of a mysterious relation of God to His creatures, established by some sort of embodiment. And this belief is just as strong now among pagan peoples as it ever was. In India it takes the form of a caste, the Brahmins. In Japan and China, it incarnates Buddha in nine forms, and anticipates another and higher incarnation of him. In Thibet, it makes a perpetual incarnation of Buddha in the Dalai Lama by heredity. Nowhere can a race or tribe be found that does not have some definite conviction that the gods come down to earth and reveal themselves to men in visible form."[1]

From the universality of the belief in incarnation among the heathen, superficial thought has hastily jumped to the conclusion that Christianity is but one among many mythologies, having no greater authority than any of the ethnic religions. This ill-founded conclusion misses the truth in two directions:—

[1] From an address by the Rev. Isaac O. Best.

1. It fails to take account of the real significance of those deep-seated and wide-spread convictions of the pagan world. They point to a permanent necessity of the human heart. They voice the inappeasable cry of the universal human spirit for the manifestation of God in some tangible and intelligible form.

Job's cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat," is the utterance of that same longing for the approachable, the intelligible, the human in God which has created the mythology of incarnations in the ethnic faiths. And it is safe to say, that this universal longing evidences one of those fundamental and permanent qualities of the human soul which must always condition the religious life in all its manifestations. If God is to reveal Himself to men at all, He must do so in accordance with the laws of the human mind, and must meet the spiritual necessities of the men to whom He would make Himself known. Indeed, a profounder grasp of the subject compels to the belief that those fundamental necessities of the human constitution are of His own creation. They must in some sense be the reflection of His nature. Illingworth has said somewhere that our conception of God is anthropomorphic because our own being is theomorphic. He has implanted such longings in order to meet and satisfy them. No religion, in which the spiritual affections have scope, is possible without the manifestation of God in the terms of humanity to reach our human need. John Fiske, in his essay on the everlasting reality of religion,[1] lays down as religion's first postulate the Quasi-Human God. He says, among other things: "Omitting from the account a few score of ingenious philosophers, it may be said that all mankind, the wisest and simplest, have taken for granted the existence of a

[1] *Through Nature to God*, Boston, 1899.

Deity, or deities, of a psychical nature more or less similar to that of humanity. Such a postulate has formed a part of all human thinking from primitive ages down to the present time . . . . The notion of a kinship between God and man remains and is rightly felt to be essential to theism. Take away from our notion of God the human element, and the theism instantly vanishes; it ceases to be a notion of God. . . . . Take away from our symbolic conception of God the human element, and that aspect of theism, which has from the outset chiefly interested mankind, is gone."[1]

We conclude, therefore, that the heathen mythologies represent a human necessity, and also correspondingly a condition of divine revelation. The myths are not altogether mythical. They have a basis in fact in the inner constitution of the human soul.

This view of the relationship between heathen myths and Christian facts also misses the truth by a failure to realize the significance of the central fact of Christianity; namely, the person of Christ Himself. The weakness of the heathen faiths consists, not so much in the principle of incarnation as in the specific applications which have been made of it. It is the distinction of Christianity that it takes this universal religious category and makes application of it to the supreme spiritual and ethical personality of history. This fact, at least, must be kept in mind throughout the entire discussion. If the categories under which Christ is interpreted are borrowed, which certainly is not proved, Christ Himself is not borrowed. Christ Himself is fact, incontestable, primary, and original. Christianity rises at once by sheer ascent to the summit of orig-

[1] Cf. van Dyke, *Gospel for an Age of Doubt*, Lect. IV. See also literature quoted in Appendix to van Dyke's 4th lecture, and Illingworth, *Personality, Human and Divine.*

inality by the assertion that the incarnation of Deity, for which universal man has longed and of which he has so persistently dreamed, was actually accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth. For, while the assertion is contradicted by the external circumstances of His career, by the reality, the simplicity, the humility of His human life, it is established, so far as any such transcendant assertion can be established by proof, by the ethical perfection, the spiritual completeness, and the historic supremacy of Jesus.

The assertion that Christianity is a plagiarized and masquerading heathenism, is absurd in view of the fact that at precisely the vital point—the character of the personality upon whom the claim of authority depends—Christianity is conceded to be without a measurably successful competitor among heathen faiths.

And, be it remembered, this is really the essential point at issue. Heathenism alleges that in her great men God has in some sense been present. The proof of such an allegation must rest primarily upon the character of the person concerning whom such statements are made. It seems to me perfectly evident that the heathen religions do not affirm concerning their great leaders and prophets all that Christianity claims for Christ,[1] but even if they did, the proof must be framed from the life history of the person in question. Christ is Christianity's challenge to the world. Christ is the basis and the proof for every assertion which we make concerning the nature of God and His relationship to humanity. The supreme fact of Christianity is Christ. Our interpretation of Him in terms of metaphysics is a secondary and derivative question. We may have inherited or borrowed our metaphysics,—the question, however, is, have we inherited or borrowed the

[1] See Cam. Theol. Essays (Mac., 1905) p. 430; also Fairbairn, Phil. Ch. Rel., 258-288, 311-568.

person whom we thus interpret? If Christ Himself is original, unique, supreme, our contention is established, and we may look with comparative indifference upon attempts to criticise our modes of apprehending and interpreting Him.

Considerations of this character must be allowed due weight in all discussions of the analogous accounts of miraculous births found in other religions. Any number of such analogies cannot prove that the story found in the Christian documents is copied and therefore mythical. If the idea of an exceptional mode of entrance into the world offers any real assistance in accounting for the career of an exceptional personality, we should naturally expect such an idea to be connected with the advent of many great men who have been objects of wonder and admiration to their own and succeeding generations.

That it does render aid to the mind in understanding an exceptional character, is no final argument against its historic truthfulness. Its fitness as an element in the explanation of an exceptional Person does not prove that it was invented to explain Him. If the idea of an unusual mode of birth in which the agency of God is more than ordinarily manifest has any value whatsoever, its appearance in myth is almost certain. But the appearance in myth is no conclusive evidence that it has not and may not appear in history. The belief that God is in a special sense the giver of great and good men to the race is certainly a rational one. Whether in any given case He has indicated, by prophetic promise or otherwise, such a special gift, is a question, primarily, of evidence. It is not *a priori* unreasonable that a character of special importance to the life of man should be from birth or before birth designated as God's messenger. The sons of promise in the Old Testament, and John the Baptist in the New, come under this

description. It is, as I have said, a matter of evidence, and one element in that evidence must be the congruity between what is affirmed concerning the birth of the person, and the character and life of the person. The uniqueness of Jesus[1] gives force to the affirmation which we make concerning the uniqueness of His birth. The miraculous birth by itself does not constitute a complete evidence of Christianity. It does not logically prove that Christ was divine—it merely proves that He was a supernaturally-begotten man. It was a distinct intimation (and herein its value lay) to those who knew of it, that an exceptional personality was about to enter the world. It was the signal of a new cycle of events. How absolutely exceptional that personality was, how wondrously new that cycle of events was to be, was left to the revelation and unfolding of them to show. Viewed without the life of Christ, the birth was a symbol of the fulfillment of hopes, and the beginning of a new era, in the actual coming of God's promised messenger. Seen in connection with the life which follows, it becomes simply a congruous item in the life of the Incarnate Son of God. The following sober and thoughtful words exactly express the truth which we have been trying to utter:—[2]

"It would, we feel, be not unbecoming for such a momentous entrance into human life as that of the Son of God, that the mode of it should be different from that of other men's birth. This is not the place to argue for the historical truth of the virgin birth of Christ; but if it be assumed that Jesus Christ is what St. Paul thought Him to be, then we can at least say with St. Ambrose, "*Talis decet partus Deum.*" No one ever believed Jesus to be divine on the ground that He was born of a virgin; and

[1] See Chapter viii.

[2] Cf. also Ottley, H. B. D., vol. ii, p. 460, Art. Incar.

it is most unlikely that He was first imagined to be born of a virgin because He was believed to be divine. But, if He really was divine, such a manner of birth was not unsuitable. It would not be a breach of natural laws in the same sense as if an ordinary man were to be so born. For a given man, who was nothing more than man, to be an exception to his kind in a matter of this sort would be a miracle such as perhaps no evidence could induce us to accept. But in this case the person to be born, unlike His brother-men, is on the hypothesis, already, an existing person before His conception, and that person is divine. What wonder if, the conditions being dissimilar, the events should be dissimilar likewise! We cannot say that God could not have been incarnate otherwise; but we can at least say that if He came in this manner, He gave a significant token of the new beginning which His birth effected in and for the race of men. It became Him." (Mason, Cam. Theol. Essays, p. 464,5.)

Having now considered certain general principles which must enter the discussion, let us turn to some of the specific cases in which pagan influences have been alleged. We have already dismissed, as out of the question, the so-called "analogies" afforded by the vulgar myths of Greece and Rome. We may begin with the Buddhist legends. As the basis of this discussion, I shall make special use of an article on Buddhism and Christianity by Prof. T. W. Rhys-Davids in the International Quarterly for March-June, 1903, which states the essential facts in form convenient for reference.

The writer brings together the most striking analogies between the teaching of the Buddhist documents and the New Testament, and also certain resemblances in details between the life of Christ and that of the Buddha. Among these is the story of the miraculous birth. It is perfectly

evident that Prof. Rhys-Davids is not greatly impressed with the resemblance in the two stories so far as the historical episodes are concerned. He says on the question of borrowing: "Surely this general similarity in the previous intellectual conditions must have been, after all, the dominant factor in the general similarity, so far as it goes, of the ethical result. Why, then, in strange forgetfulness of the well-known law of parsimony, seek farther for a cause that is not required, and postulate a borrowing for which there is no historical evidence? No one would even suggest for a moment that any borrowing is possible in the case of early Buddhism. Why suggest that in the case of early Christianity such borrowing is not only possible but probable?

The case of the episodes is very different—so different at least, that it is best to discuss it always apart from the question of ethics. In the ethics, we find really certain deep-reaching similarities on points of essential moment. In the episodes, the resemblances are very much on the surface. If the suggestion be that there has been imitation, the word "resemblance" seems out of place. The latter should rather be described as a travesty or a mockery of the earlier.

'And the Jesuit missionary would not be so far wrong when he thought of the Thibetans that the Devil had deceived them with a blasphemous imitation of the religion of Christ."

We have but to look at the two narratives side by side to see at once the utter impossibility of imitation, at least on the part of the Christian writers. Taking for granted, what is not proved nor even shown to be probable, that there was communication between adherents of the two faiths, imitation is out of the question.[1]

[1] I have been unable to examine A. J. Edmund's book (Buddhists and Christian Gospels, for sale by Open Court Pub. Co., 1905), but from a

In a comparatively late document of Buddhism (the Mahā-Vastu), which is to be dated somewhat earlier than the Christian era, there is an account of the birth of the Buddha.[1] "His mother before the conception retires to keep the fast, and in complete chastity sleeps surrounded by her women. Her husband is not there. As she sleeps she dreams a dream: it seems as if a white elephant enters her side. This is the conception." Is there any one of sound mind and the most rudimentary literary sense who can believe that this puerile legend, with its dream of the sacred white elephant, is the source of the sublime narratives of the Gospel? Besides, as Prof. Rhys-Davids points out, there is no suggestion that the mother was a virgin at the time, nor of any connection with prophecy.

Review (Princeton R., Apr., 1906) I take the following quotation: "I hold to the independent origin of Buddhist and Christian Scriptures, provided we mean their fundamental documents. The Epistles of Paul, the Gospel of Mark, and the Logia-source, are dependent for their primary inspiration upon the life and deeds of Jesus; and secondly, upon the Old Testament oracles, the current belief of the times as embodied in works like Enoch, and the personal convictions of earnest men like Paul, Peter, and Matthew. But when we come to late documents such as Luke, John, and the canonical First Gospel the case is different. This is now admitted by all historical critics, and the most that I advance in this direction is the possibility of the Gentile Gospel of Luke, in certain traits extraneous to the Synoptic narrative having been tinged by the Gotama Epic."

In this careful and modest statement (in striking contrast with many extravagant claims in this connection) we note that if our contention be at all successful concerning the age of the Infancy documents, the possibility of Buddhist influence goes utterly by the board. As a matter of fact, the Infancy narratives stand among the most primitive portions of the New Testament and exhibit fewer touches of the later ideas of the disciples than almost any others. Belonging to the primitive ground work of the written Gospel their connection with Buddhist documents or derivation from them becomes an unbelievable hypothesis.

[1] Cf. Rhys-Davids' *Buddhist Birth Stories*. Hopkins, *Religions of India* (Ginn & Co., 1895), p. 340, holds that quite probably all the birth stories are later than our era. This is at least open to question.

These two suggestions are absolutely destructive of the theory of imitation on the part of the Christian writers. There is no way to account for the invention of a virgin birth [1] in contradistinction to a miraculous birth which is claimed for Gotama. Moreover, it is inconceivable that a Christian writer, finding the statement of Gotama's birth in Buddhist writings, or hearing of it from the lips of Buddhist missionaries, should, at the same time, be accessible enough to heathen notions to accept it, and Jewish enough to strip it of all heathen accessories, and lift it up into connection with prophecy in order to clothe it with purely Jewish forms of thought. Moreover, the form in which the story appears in the Mahā-Vastu (that is a miraculous conception on the part of a married woman) was far better adapted for acceptance and defense than the story of a miraculous conception on the part of a virgin as told in the Gospels.[2]

There is no adequate motive for the change. There are still other reasons for rejecting this theory. The natural history of the miraculous birth of Gotama, the Buddha, is clearly exhibited in the documents.

As has already been said, "the Buddhist legend is not found in the oldest documents. It occurs neither in the chapter on 'Wonders and Marvels' (namely, at the birth of a Buddha) in the Majjhima-nikayas, nor in the sublime legend in the Digha-nikaya. These two passages agree, nearly word for word, but in the 'Wonders and Marvels,'

[1] That the Prophecy, Isa. vii, 14, did not create the idea, see chap. ii.

[2] Some justification for this statement may be deemed necessary. In the case of a married woman, of whom it is claimed that her child was miraculously conceived, those who disbelieve the miracle would simply charge both husband and wife of conspiracy to defraud. The chastity of the woman would not be called in question. The attitude of the Jews toward the miraculous birth of Christ, as shown in the Pantheras story, is evidence enough of the difficulty involved in the New Testament narrative.

probably the later of the two, a line or two is added to the effect, 'When a Wisdom-being (Bodesat, that is, a being who will become a Buddha) has descended into its mother's womb no thought of lust as regards men arises to her, neither can she be affected, in the way of lustful thought, by any man.'" Prof. Rhys-Davids adds: "This passage, thus introduced, may be the germ of the later development." Long after this comes the second step in the process; namely, the story of the Mahā-Vastu. Then later yet the legend grows complete, reaching even to the description of the mother of a Buddha as the Divine Virgin—a suggestion which was not received with any great favor. Now in the probable natural history of the Buddha legend, from the idea that the mother of the Buddha must be free from earthly emotions, to the full grown notion that she must be a virgin and the mother of no other child, the psychological connection at least is clear. But the origin of the Gospel story, if indeed it be a legend, must have been altogether different. The ideas which are embodied in the Buddhist legend would not have appealed to a Jew. He had no such ascetic view of the marriage relation.[1] The pure love of a wife for her husband could have in it for the Jewish mind no touch of any emotion unworthy of the mother of the Messiah.

To the Jew there was no superiority in the state of celibacy. In the Gospel narrative itself there is clear indication that the authors considered Mary in reality the wife of Joseph, and the mother of his children. To the genuine Jew there could have been no shock, so far as his ideas of the sacredness of marriage were concerned, in the thought that the Messiah was born as other men. The virgin birth must have made its appeal to him at an

[1] Barring the Essenes who were isolated and despised, asceticism among the Jews was a negligible factor.

entirely different angle, by making the divine agency in the birth of the Messiah more clearly manifest.

While Prof. Rhys-Davids rejects the superficial and unfounded theory of imitation, at the same time he affirms an analogy between two narratives, which it is worth our while to study a little more closely.

"As we have already seen, the Buddhist legend is not found in the oldest documents. It is a latter development, under the influence of two great "ideals" current in India when Buddhism arose, the ideal of the Wise-man of Old, the Seer (the Buddha or the Rishi), and the ideal of the King of the Golden Age (the Cakkavatin). Both were beautiful conceptions, and with the latter were mingled the ancient glories of the sun god. The union of these two was to the early Buddhist what the union of the two ideas of the Messiah and the Logos was to the early Christians. . . And it is the Buddha-Cakkavatti circle of ideas in the one case, just as it is the Messiah-Logos circle of ideas in the other, that has had a larger influence than the real facts in formulating the views held by the early disciples as to the person of their Master."

The kernel of this discussion is to be found in the last sentence quoted. The vital point at issue is not the reality of the analogy, that may be admitted at once without question, but as to what lies back of the analogy. We may admit that the union of the two ideas of the wise man of Old and King of the Golden Age was to the early Buddhist what the union of the two ideas of the Messiah and the Logos was to the early Christians, but that in the case of Christianity the Messiah-Logos circle of ideas has had a larger influence than the real facts in formulating the views held by the early disciples as to the person of their Master, we emphatically deny and are prepared to show the reason why. The parallel thus

drawn breaks down in three essential particulars. In the first place, there is a break in historic continuity between Gotama and the opinions held concerning him by his disciples, which puts these at once into the realms of secondary judgments. Gotama, so far as the personality of God is concerned, was an atheist. He taught a system of ethics on a purely materialistic basis. Had his teachings been literally followed, his disciples would have been disbelievers in the unseen world and divine reality. There is, therefore, an irreducible contradiction between the teaching of Gotama, who repudiates the idea of Deity and the teaching of his disciples, which makes him an incarnation of Deity. Gotama was deified in spite of himself. One might as consistently make a Deity of Auguste Comte. As has been well said, this process of apotheosis applied to Gotama is a striking exhibition of the inherent religiousness of men, but it destroys completely the authority of the Buddha category as applied to Gotama.[1] It is possible, of course, that a man may be a reflection of the divine without being conscious of it, but he could not be an incarnation of the Deity even in most extreme humiliation without being conscious of it.

The same person could not be at once a god and an atheist. Gotama could not have known that he was supernaturally conceived, because he did not believe in the supernatural at all.

This general argument does not hold against Christianity. We have undoubted authority for the statement that

[1] Fairbairn says (Phil. Ch. Rel. p. 243): "His people could not stand where he did; his philosophy could not become a religion without a person to be worshiped, and they, by a sublime inconsistency of logic, rose in the region of the imagination and the heart to a higher consistency and deified the denier of the divine." Fairbairn denies the title atheist to Gotama. Undoubtedly, on the ethical side, his consciousness was theistic, but for him a personal God had no existence.

Jesus not only believed in God, but also in a special sense the messenger and revealer of God. Leaving entirely aside the testimony of John on the basis of the Synoptics, we are compelled to the belief that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah of His people and the revealer of God. We have a basis, therefore, in our knowledge of the self-consciousness of Jesus for our faith in His Messiahship. There is no contradiction involved in attributing to Jesus a superhuman dignity and wisdom; for He at least believed in a wisdom and power greater than man.

It has been urged against the historicity of the birth narratives that Jesus Himself does not confirm them, and therefore, presumably, was not acquainted with the facts. This argument is based almost entirely upon His silence, which is not at all conclusive. The only sentence which can be quoted against it is a purely conventional remark about His home.

But the parallel is broken in another particular. The question of time is an important one. We have already noticed that the Buddhist birth legends are comparatively late, arising long after the first documents of Buddhism were promulgated, and gradually developing through long periods of time. In forming his parallel Prof. Rhys-Davids makes this statement concerning the birth narratives of the Gospels: "As is well known, the doctrine of the immaculate conception[1] is not referred to in the oldest of the Christian documents, the epistles attributed to the original apostles and to Paul, nor in the oldest of the Gospels, that according to Mark."

As a matter of fact, the sources of the Infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke are among the oldest documents of the New Testament, but taking the statement just as it

[1] A misstatement for the miraculous conception which is amazingly prevalent in discussions of this subject.

stands the parallel with the Buddhist legends breaks down. The lapse of time between the earliest and latest of the Christian documents on any supposition that can plausibly be defended, is infinitesimal compared with the time consumed in the development of the Buddhist legends. The entire space of time covered by the history of the formation of the New Testament documents could be spanned by one human life, while the period of the Buddhist stories is measured by ages rather than years.[1]

If anything more is needed to exhibit the impossibility of accounting for the Infancy narratives by any known operation of the mythopœic tendency, it would be furnished by this interesting historic comparison.

The parallel breaks still more completely at another point, in the actual historic results of the two systems. Gotama himself was a reformer and philanthropist, and, compared with the teachings which he displaced, he represents a great advance. But his teaching, that misery is coextensive with existence, and that the only attainable bliss lies in cessation of being, resulted practically in enchaining in moral and spiritual hopelessness the millions brought under his sway.

The Buddha, typified in the cold, impassive figure of stone with calm, expressionless features, sitting in endless contemplation of vacancy, endeavoring to extirpate all natural emotions, has no message for the modern world

[1] The importance of the question of time in connection with the New Testament estimate and interpretation of Jesus should not be overlooked.

Harnack has said: "Within two generations from His death Jesus Christ was already put upon the highest plane upon which men can put Him." (*What is Christianity?* p. 154, Eng. Tr.) In connection with this statement Prof. Mason makes the following comment, "As Harnack put the Epistle to the Romans between 52 and 54, and the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and (more doubtfully) Ephesians in the years 57–59, or perhaps 56–58, he might have said within one generation," (*Cam. Theol. Essays*, p. 429, note).

of living men who have a grip upon the real meaning of life. It has no blessing for womanhood, no hope for the world, save in ceasing to be. The followers of Buddha have been left behind in the progress of the world because they were taught to hope nothing except ceasing to be, and to attempt nothing save the repression of feeling. Buddhism is the survival of a departed era.

Christ has been the inspiration of all progress, the creator of new eras without end, the leader of each generation of workers because he poured into the veins of his followers the tonic of a deathless hope. Christianity is the religion of the rising sun. The future is always within its hand.

On all grounds, therefore, we are justified in rejecting the hypothesis that the Buddha legends had any part in the formation of the Infancy narrative.

If the virgin birth cannot be said to be an importation from Buddhism, may it not have come from Egypt? The doctrine of a virgin birth is said to be found in Egyptian documents, as also other "foregleams" of Christianity. Sayce says: "We owe to them (the Egyptian thinkers) the chief molds into which religious thought has since been thrown. The doctrines of emanation, of a trinity wherein one god manifests himself in three persons, of absolute thought as the underlying and permanent substance of all things, all go back to the priestly philosophers of Egypt." This is enthusiastic, but perhaps not too much so. But we shall never understand the history of religion, unless we keep clearly in mind differences, as well as resemblances, in the various forms of faith. The Egyptian doctrine of virgin births is connected with the advent of kings, and is especially marked in the case of the Pharaoh Amenhotep III. We will permit Prof. Sayce to tell the story of this myth, and also to furnish us a translation of

the inscription in which it is found. "On the western wall of one of the chambers in the southern portion of the Temple of Luxor, Champollion first noticed that the birth of Amenhotep III. is portrayed; the inscription and scenes which describe it have since been copied, and we learn from them that he had no human father; Amon himself descended from heaven and became the father of the future king. His mother was still a virgin when the God of Thebes 'incarnated himself' so that she might 'behold him in his divine form.'" The inscription, according to Sayce, is as follows: "Said by Amon-Ra, etc.: He (the God) has incarnated himself in the royal person of this husband, Thotmes IV., etc. He found her lying in her beauty; he stood beside her as a god. She has fed upon sweet odors emanating from his majesty. He has gone to her in order that he may be a father through her. He caused her to behold him in his divine form when he had gone upon her that she might bear a child at the sight of his beauty. His lovableness penetrated her flesh, filling it with the odor of all his perfumes of Punt.

"Said by Mut-em-na before the majesty of this august god Amon, etc., the twofold divinity: 'How great is thy twofold will, how (glorious thy) designs in making thy heart repose upon me! Thy dew is upon all my flesh in . . . This royal god has done all that is pleasing to him with her.'

"Said by Amon before her majesty: 'Amenhotep is the name of the son which is in thy womb. This child shall grow up according to the words which proceed out of thy mouth. He shall exercise sovereignty and righteousness in this land unto its very end. My soul is in him; he shall wear the twofold crown of royalty ruling the two lands like the sun forever.'"

Here, then, are the facts. What conclusion should we

draw from them? Have we here a clear case of the heathen origin of a Christian doctrine? Let us look at it.

To begin with, I am compelled to express what may seem an unreasonable skepticism as to the distinctly religious character of this so-called "virgin birth." I have my doubts as to the real religious value attached to it even by those who were most zealous in advocating it. The Pharaonic cult was a politico-religious combination in which, as it seems to me, the political element altogether overshadowed the religious.

In the first place, it was not the primitive religion of Egypt. It was forced upon the people by conquerors who brought their religion with them. The divineness of the Pharaohs as the off-spring of the sun god was the necessary theoretical justification of their usurpation,[1] and throughout its entire history there are significant touches which indicate the political basis of the cult. It ceased at Babylon on the overthrow of the dynasty with which it had been connected. Its rise in Egypt was coincident with the advance of the conquering usurpers from the south. It was the embodiment of the political principle known as "the divine right of kings." It was in conflict with the native religion, which was a worship of nature as embodied in sacred animals. In spite of all the efforts of the priests, the new religion could not be unified with the old. Practically, as we know from incidents in the reign of Rameses II., in the arena of politics there was a constant conflict between the priests and the Pharaohs. Rebellion against the Pharaoh was theoretically impiety against the gods, yet rebellions and popular tumults and uprisings in which the authority of the Pharaohs were imperiled were not infrequent, showing that the divinity of the ruler was not

[1] Cheyne says that this divinity of the king was always peculiarly emphasized in connection with usurpers.

too securely held. The fifth dynasty is the first in Egyptian history to take the name "Son of Ra." It is significant that these kings came from a frontier island inhabited by foreigners. These foreigners, instead of being sons of Horus, became sons of Ra. On the basis of a Babylonian analogy (the priests of Babylon having refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of a foreign king who had not been adopted by the sungod), Sayce says: "It may be (in the case of the kings of the fifth dynasty) that the price of their acknowledgement by the priests and princes of Memphis was their acceptance of the title 'Son of Ra.' It narrowed their pretensions to divinity, and at the same time implied their submission to the god of the great sanctuary which stood in such close relation with Memphis."[1] In other words, the divine standing of the ruling monarch varied with the stability of his temporal power. A new king received his rank in the Pantheon at the hands of the priests. He had no more divinity granted to him than he could maintain *vi et armis*. And, so far as the people were concerned, the divinity that hedged the Pharaohs never was so clear and undoubted a tenet of faith as the sacredness of the bull Apis, or of the cats and crocodiles which were protected with such great care. An instance is related of a Greek officer under one of the Ptolemies who carelessly caused the death of a cat. All the powers of the throne which were exercised in his favor could not save his life.

But most significant of all for our present purpose, is the fact that this alleged virgin birth was expressly framed to meet a dynastic exigency. Let Sayce speak again.[2]

"Legitimacy of birth was reckoned through the mother

[1] Hibbuert Lec., *Egypt. and Bab. Rel.*, p. 88.

[2] Cf., also Cheyne, B. P., p. 237 and references; Maspero's *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 259.

by whom, accordingly, the divine nature of the Pharaoh was handed on. Only those who had been born of a princess of the royal family could be considered to possess it in all its purity; and where this title was wanting, it was necessary to assume the direct intervention of a god. The mother of Amenhotep III. (the king whose birth is alleged to have been miraculous) was of Asiatic origin; we read therefore, on the walls of the Temple of Luxor, that he was born of a virgin, and the god of Thebes. Alexander, the Conqueror of Egypt, was a Macedonian; it was needful accordingly that he should be acknowledged as a son by the god of the oasis of Ammon."[1]

Upon this one consideration, the theory of Egyptian influence over the Infancy narrative is destroyed, and incidentally the larger part of the alleged pagan analogies lose their force. According to Canon Cheyne's own interpretation, the word "virgin," as used in the myths, goes back to the tribal mother who was independent of the marriage tie, held chief place in the clan, and with the rest of the women "shared a measure of free love." The myths in which these alleged virgin births occur, reflect the ideas of people who had reached the polyandrous stage of social development, in which the woman rules the tribe, and has many husbands.

It ought not to be necessary to say that of this influence the Infancy narratives show not the slightest trace. To say nothing of Matthew, who places Mary in the background, puts the direction of affairs in the hands of Joseph, and guards his dignity and rights with scrupulous care; even Luke, who brings Mary forward, and is keenly alive to her significance, subordinates her to the Child, and represents her as a humble, submissive, and obedient handmaid of the Lord. In this connection the genealogies are

[1] *Ibid*, p. 45.

significant. In both cases we have Joseph's genealogy given. The true Jewish attitude is exhibited, which traces the birthright and inheritance through the male line.

But to return to the Egyptian instances, we find that the alleged cases of miraculous conception were simply legal fictions invented and accepted to legitimatize a claimant to a throne. There is no evidence that anybody believed it as a religious truth. There was no genuine religious conviction in the acceptance of the divinity of Amenhotep III., except, perhaps, among those fanatically attached to the dynasty.[1]

This judgment is confirmed by the wording of the inscription itself. According to Sayce, the god Amon, who was the father of Amenhotep, incarnated himself before the conception took place. Once more, according to the inscription, the god parent became incarnate in the royal person of the queen's husband, Thothmes IV. That is to say, that the alleged virgin birth is not a virgin birth at all, but a flatterer's idealization of the birth of a prince, whose claim to the throne which he occupies is not beyond question.[2]

The analogy, therefore, which the story presents is not really an analogy at all, but is a series of contrasts throughout.

Moreover, I doubt the accessibility of this myth to Jewish minds. It belonged to the life of ancient Egypt; the record of it was locked away in the sacred language;

[1] Of course I do not mean to say that the untaught crowd did not after a fashion worship the Pharaoh along with their sacred bulls, crocodiles, ibises, and cats. My argument refers to the men who formulated the alleged statements concerning the miraculous birth of the kings.

[2] On the parentage of Amenhotep III., cf. Breasted, *Hist. Egypt* (Scribner's) 1905, p. 328; Rawlinson, *Ancient Egypt*, vol. ii, p. 261 (Longman's and Co. 1881); Budge, *Hist. Egypt* (Ox. Un. Press, 1902), vol. iv, p. 90; Brugsch, *Egypt under Pharaohs* (Scrib., 1891), p. 201.

the form in which this inscription gives it was no part of the popular faith. Indeed, long years before Christ came, the original form of the myth had faded from the minds of the Egyptian teachers of religion themselves into a mere allegory; for we are told that a later statue represents the god pouring the sacred ichor, which constitutes this transmitted divinity, into the veins of the king standing before him.

To complete the severance of the myth from the Gospel narratives, it is necessary only to bring them together. Read the inscription, and note the sensuousness of the imagery in which the sacred mystery of life is unveiled, and compare it with the story of the Gospels, in which, with a delicacy which surpasses admiration, words are used in such a way as to reveal the central fact, while the circumstances are wrapped in an impenetrable seclusion. In passing from the one narrative to the other we enter a different world of ideas and of feelings.

I have dealt with this one case of parallelism somewhat in detail because the case is typical. In the vast majority of instances, as in this one, the resemblances are apparent and superficial, while the differences are world-wide and deep-seated.

The theory of heathen influence has undergone transformation at the hands of Canon Cheyne.[1] Certain fundamental questions involved in Cheyne's book I shall deal with in another place. Here we are concerned with his theory of the origin of the Infancy story. He abandons definitely the creation of the narrative by the influence of Isa. vii, 14, and also the direct influence of contemporary heathenism. He attributes the rise of the stories to what might be called a domesticated Jewish heathenism. The theory is an application of the new pan-Babylonian propaganda. Let the author speak for himself.

[1] *Bible Problems*, 1904, (Crown Library, Putnam).

"The historical explanation of the statement of the virgin birth of Christ, which seems to me to be the most probable, is that it originated, not in a mistranslation of the Immanuel prophecy (Isa. vii, 14), which is Prof. Harnack's theory, nor, immediately in a non-Jewish, heathen story, adopted by Gentile Christians, a story such as those which Mr. Gartland in his *Perseus*, and Prof. Usener in his Weihnachtsfest, have collected in abundance (this is Prof. Schmiedel's theory), but in a story of non-Jewish origin current in Jewish circles, and borrowed from them by certain Jewish Christians (this is Prof. Gunkel's theory)."[1]

The writer criticises the theories of Usener and Schmiedel (and the criticism would also apply to Soltau) in two particulars:—

1. They are wrong in stating that the circles in which the statement of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ were first current were Gentile Christian.

2. In making too wide a search for parallels; that is, in passing beyond the range of connection with the Jews.

The parallels to be sought are Arabian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and Persian, because these were most likely to have influenced the beliefs of the Jews. These two criticisms are of immense importance to the argument as we shall see later.

But we ask, How did the heathen notions become domesticated in Israel? The Canon is ready with an answer to this natural question: The basis of this argument is to be found in the fact that long before the life of Christ the Israelites had come under the influence of highly-developed Oriental cultures. The influence was especially strong in the post-exilic period. In other words, long before the Christian era, heathen elements were incorporated into the thought and life of the

[1] Pages 71, 72.

Jews, so that complete Messianic myths were at hand, ready-made, and nothing was needed but an historic person like Jesus to whom they might be definitely applied. But this process of adoption was accompanied by adaptation. "Of course the religion of Israel reacted against these influences, the dangerousness of which must have been apparent. Consequently the things which were borrowed were more or less completely Hebraized and rendered innocuous." [1] Where is this influence of Oriental Mythology to be found? What evidences do we discover in the Scriptures that such a syncretism has taken place?

"The constant pressure of Oriental beliefs on the Israelitish religion is abundantly attested, and its traces are nowhere more visible than in the Apocalyptic portions of Daniel, and in the book of the Revelation."

Between the last statement quoted above and the elucidation of the historic parallels which he urges, Canon Cheyne inserts a parenthetic remark, and, connected with it, a long note, the two together forming one of the main props of his entire argument:—

"Parenthetically, I may remark here that the popular Messianic belief was probably much more definite than we might suppose from most of the Jewish religious literature. It received a great impulse from the reference in the Book of Daniel (vii, 13 *f*), but this reference itself proves that the Messianic belief had already a development behind it. And from the Synoptic Gospels we see that this belief was deeply fixed in the popular mind in the time of Jesus. So much may be stated, with the brevity which our circumstances demand, to illustrate the statement that the account in Matt. i, 18, has most probably arisen out of a non-Jewish story, known in certain Jewish circles, and adopted from these by some Christians." (Page 73.)

[1] Page 70.

The conclusion to which the long and somewhat confused note leads is, that the being resembling a man in Dan. vii, 13 is very probably no other than the prince-angel Michael.

Further, it is concluded that this being is also the Messiah.

"Finally, this man-like being, who is Michael and also the Messiah, corresponds to Marduk (Merodach), the son of Ea, and to Nabu (Nebo), the son of Marduk—originally, perhaps indentical (Zimmern)—in the genealogical system of Babylonian theology."

The cycle of connection between the myth and the Infancy narrative is made through Rev. xii in which the woman mentioned under such glowing imagery is a transformation of the Babylonian myth connected with Marduk. The seven-headed dragon (Rev. xii, 3) also called the "ancient serpent" is no other than Tiamat, whom the god of the springtide sun—Marduk—encountered and overcame.

Prof. Gunkel has also pointed out striking points of contact between Rev. xii and Dan. vii, and argues that since the former passage cannot possibly be viewed as an imitation of the latter, and since Dan. vii has been proved (by himself) to have strong Babylonian affinities, we cannot do otherwise than assume a Babylonian origin for Rev. xii.

This interpretation of the passage in Rev. xii, as the working up of a sun-myth ultimately of Babylonian origin, is made in spite of the fact that exactly such a myth has not yet been found in the Babylonian records so far brought to light.

Now, interpret the passage in the Revelation as the story of the Messiah's mother, and the chain of connection between Babylon and Bethlehem is complete. Cheyne

says: "That the woman, 'clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars,' was, to the Jewish narrator, the mother of the expected Messiah, is plain. But it is from the kindred mythologies of Babylonia and Egypt that we learn why the woman was so magnificently arrayed.

"The reason was that, according to the underlying myth, she was the queen of heaven, the mother of the sungod."

The next step is to elaborate the parallel between the passage in the Revelation and the Infancy narrative. "In the original myth of the world-redeemer's birth, a place was doubtless given to the persecution of His mother by the dragon. No practiced eye can fail to see its counterpart in Matt. ii. The infuriated dragon becomes the angry Herod, whose popular reputation for cruelty marked him out as a fit historical representative of the blood-thirsty monster of chaos." There are several important and striking differences which the reader may follow out for himself. I wish, however, to quote a striking passage in which there is more than appears to the eye. "The woman arrayed with the sun—a representation still preserved in the Jewish-Christian Apocalyptic passage—became to the writer in the Matthean prelude a lowly Jewish maiden; the functions of her Son became, not the destruction of the chaos-monster, nor the ruling of nations with a rod of iron, but the internal as well as external salvation of His people; the royal capital of the Redeemer became not Babylon but Jerusalem; the dragon with jaws wide open to devour, became Herod, 'seeking the young child' in Bethlehem 'to destroy him;' the flight of the mother into the wilderness (the child had been caught up to God's throne) became the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt."

The conclusion of the whole matter is thus stated: "So

far as the virginity of the mother of Christ is concerned, I speak as a historical critic, that the passage in the prelude to the first Gospel is a Jewish-Christian transformation of a primitive story, derived ultimately, in all probability, from Babylonia, and analogous to the Jewish transformation of the Babylonian cosmogeny in the opening section of Genesis."

In attempting the criticism of this theory I wish to call attention, first of all, to the fact that the fundamental thesis upon which the entire structure depends is contested. The influence of Babylonian ideas upon the Old Testament is in dispute, and, while Dr. Cheyne is perfectly sure that the question has been finally settled, other scholars just as competent differ from him. That cosmological myths have been imported and domesticated within the limits of Israel, is denied by strong and capable thinkers. The matter is at least doubtful. There is no question, however, that in all periods of Jewish history, even when apostasy was most widespread as in the days of Elijah, there have been some who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Early in the post-exilic period, when the alleged foreign influence was most general, a reaction began against all forms of heathen thought, and this reaction gathered momentum through the Maccabean and Roman periods, which carried it down to the days of Christ.[1] There were always some who accepted nothing heathen if they were aware of its heathen nature and origin. There was an inner spiritual core of the nation to whom all heathen conceptions were an abomination. It is, therefore, at least a doubtful question whether the writers of the New Testament may not have been of this class, insulated by the intensity of their Hebraism from contact with heathen ideas. Of this, more hereafter.

[1] Kent, *History of J. P. in Bab., Per.*, and *Grk. Periods*, pp. 262-3; Riggs, *Mac. and Roman Period*, pp. 16, 17.

The essential point now at issue is the contact with heathenism. Cheyne criticises the views of other theorists on this subject, on the ground that in going so far afield into heathenism for analogies they have gathered many which could not have been accessible to the Jews of any period. But is he any more happy in his attempt to connect heathenism with the New Testament, and especially the Infancy narratives? Taking up the chain of connection which he has formed between the Babylonian myths and the prelude of Matthew, I notice that it is defective in three essential particulars. In the first place, his interpretation of Dan. vii, 13 is more than doubtful. According to the best interpretation of the passage, the manlike being refers not to any personality[1] whether the Messiah, Michael or Marduk, but to the character of the kingdom. Just as the other kingdoms which are characterized by brute force and cruelty are symbolized by beasts, so the last great kingdom which is to be characterized by reason and justice is symbolized by a manlike being. It refers to the Messiah inferentially, but the primary reference is to the nature of the Messianic kingdom. The resemblance to the Marduk myth, according to this interpretation, becomes very dim.

In the second place, the interpretation of the passage in the Revelation as a reference to the Messiah's birth is also doubtful (see Cheyne: Note, p. 240).

Dr. Gore interprets this passage, as does Dr. Cheyne, as a reference to Christ's birth, but even so, there is in the passage no hint of a miraculous conception. Even if the passage can be connected on one side with the Babylonian mythology, it cannot be united on the other with the Infancy narrative. We have an ideal representation of the birth of the World's Redeemer from faithful Israel,

[1] Mathews, *Messianic Hope in N. T.*, p. 31, note 4.

and His triumph over foes that lie in wait at His advent. In important particulars, it departs from the historic account of Christ's birth. But the representation is wholly Jewish. "The use of the number twelve indeed suggests the thought of a bond of connection between this light (worn by the woman), and the Christian Church. The tribes of Israel, the type of God's spiritual Israel, were in number twelve; our Lord chose to Himself twelve apostles; the new Jerusalem has twelve gates, and at the gate twelve angels, and names written thereon which are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel."[1]

In the third place, if the interpretation given both of Daniel vii and Rev. xii is correct, and the connection of both with Babylon established, the fact has no bearing whatsoever upon the derivation of Matthew's narrative. This belongs to a different form of literature altogether. It is outside the cycle of common influences. The transformation which Dr. Cheyne points out in the story shows this important fact. He says that the dragon of the myth becomes Herod and the woman clothed with the sun and crowned with stars a lowly Jewish maiden, etc. It is evident that if there has been any transformation here it has been in the opposite direction. A Jewish maiden, who was believed to be mother of the Messiah, might in Apocalyptic (perhaps has) become the star-crowned woman in heaven, and Herod, the enemy of the Messiah, might become a dragon, but by no conceivable process could the order be reversed. The only plausible evidence which he adduces of domesticated heathen ideas are found in Apocalyptic literature. But isn't Dr. Cheyne familiar enough with this literature to recognize that the prelude of Matthew moves in a totally different realm, and is the result of different influences? If he doesn't see this distinction,

[1] Milligan, Ex. Bib., Rev., p. 198.

there must be something lacking in his "practiced eye." Let any reader contrast the extravagant description, the high-sounding epithets, the cosmic transactions of the myths, with the story of the Gospels—the humble maiden, the carpenter, the inn stable, the simple language, the definite dates and locations—and ask himself whether it is possible to believe that the Gospel story is an adaptation of the myth.[1]

[1] The very fact that this alleged heathen element is so disguised that a special critical apparatus is required to reveal its presence is argument enough against its reality. Unless it is the work of a conscious and deliberate fabricator no such concealment would be attempted. Naïve unconscious heathenism is naked and unashamed. Combinations of pagan and Christian elements are always mixtures not chemical unions, and the pagan elements are distinctly traceable. In most instances the motives operating in the minds of the originators of such schemes are also plainly discernible. A complete amalgamation of Christian and heathen ideas in which the heathen elements reappear in purely Christian forms is unknown to history. "Out of the fusing of cosmological myths and philosophies of Oriental and Greek paganism with Christian historical elements in the crucible of its own speculation, there arose numerous systems of a higher fantastic sort of religious philosophy, which were included under the common name of Gnosticism. The pagan element upon the whole is the prevailing one, inasmuch as in most Gnostic systems Christianity is not represented as the conclusion and completion of the development of salvation given in the Old Testament, but often merely as the continuation and climax of the pagan religion of nature and the pagan mystery worship." (Kurtz, *Ch. His.*, Eng. Tr., vol. i, p. 99.)

In these known combinations of Christian and pagan elements, the interest in paganism is open and undisguised. In apologetic concessions from the Christian side such as we find in Justin the motive is also apparent. A striking example of easily discernible pagan elements in a Christian document is to be found in the Gospel of Peter (quoted and commented upon by Wilkinson: Early History of the Gospels pp. 33, f.) In the account of the Resurrection occurs this passage: "And as they declared what things they had seen, again they see coming forth from the tomb, three men, and the two following them. And of the two the head reached unto the heaven, but the head of Him that was led by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens saying. 'Hast thou preached to them that sleep?' And an answer was heard from the Cross,

There is another difficulty much more important than these, the consideration of which will lead us to the very heart of the whole question.

If the Gospel story is such an adaptation, it has undergone a complete moral and spiritual transformation. The parallels with the Gospel story upon which Dr. Cheyne dwells most at length are the Tammuz cult in N. Arabia and the Babylonian myth of Marduk. The latter we have already noticed. Of the former he says: "Dusares (local name for Tammuz) in fact was worshiped, both at Petra and at Elusa, as 'the only begotten of the Lord' (*μονογενης τύυ Δεσπὸτου*, etc.), and his mother as the virgin (*παρθένος, Χορε*)." The phrase "only begotten" may remind us of the "only begotten Son" in Jno. i, 18 (Cheyne, p. 75).

It is also to be noted that the Tammuz cult (according to Jerome) was practiced in the reputed cave of the Nativity at Bethlehem. How close the parallel in words! But let us look a little more particularly at the thing signified.

Istar, who was beloved by Tammuz "was conceived of as a virgin, or at all events as a goddess who might indulge in amours so long as they did not lead to regular marriage." In other words, the only meaning of the word "virgin" as applied to Istar was that she was not regularly married. The nature of the Tammuz cult in the cave of the Nativity may be inferred from the following description which I introduce only because it is necessary to an

'Yea.'" When we learn from the sacred book of the sect of Elkesaites that they taught doctrines in which gigantic beings like angels figure we are not at a loss to assign this document to its probable source. Is there anything comparable with this in the Infancy narrative? The incident which comes nearest to it is the visit of the wise men—but while this is told in the phraseology of the Magians, it is yet related from the view-point of the Jew, and without exhibiting the slightest interest in their peculiar doctrines.

understanding of the problem. "At Erech, Istar was served by organized bands of unmarried maidens who prostituted themselves in honor of the goddess. . . . . In return for the lives they led, 'the handmaids of Istar' were independent from the control of men."[1]

Add to this the statement in which Dr. Cheyne gives the historical interpretation of the word "virgin," and the theory in all its completeness will stand before you.

"And what was the original meaning of the term 'virgin'? As has long since been shown, it expressed the fact that the great mythic mother-goddess was independent of the marriage-tie. In those remote times to which the cult of that goddess properly belonged, 'the mother held the chief place in the clan, and all women shared a measure of free love.'[2] The goddess-mother, in fact, preceded the goddess-wife."

We have at last tracked this hypothesis to its lair, and the quest has led us into the foul depths of the orgiastic and licentious rites of the heathen worship with which the Hebrew people were forbidden to have any fellowship upon penalty of the wrath of Jehovah, and for falling into which they were punished with fire and sword again and again. We have, then, this striking phenomenon for which the theory must account: A narrative, marked by these three outstanding peculiarities, Hebraic monotheism (witness the songs); spirituality of mind (witness the characters); exalted purity of heart (witness the reticence as to details, and the general atmosphere and tone of the narrative); was derived more or less mediately from a heathen polytheistic mythology, accompanied by groveling materialism of mind, and impure social rites. Surely a white lily never grew from mud so foul. Moreover, the

[1] Sayce, Eg. Bab. Rel.
[2] Quoting Barton, Sem. Origins, p. 84.

heart, the central mystery, namely, the Lord's birth, is original. "The stress laid on the virginity (in the ordinary sense of the word) of the holy mother is peculiar to the evangelist."

Everyone must admit that this marvelous transformation of mud into a flower requires some explanation; indeed an explanation that will really grip hold of the difficulties involved in the supposition. In order to exhibit Dr. Cheyne's explanation of this extraordinary phenomenon, I wish to bring together a number of sentences which lose nothing by being taken out of their connection.

The first one refers to the matter of heathen borrowings in general, the others to the specific instance in hand.

"Of course, the religion of Israel reacted against these influences, *the dangerousness of which must have been apparent* (italics mine). Consequently, the things which were borrowed were more or less completely Hebraized, and rendered innocuous." (P. 70, 71.) "We must remember that the real presence of a spirit of holiness in Israel is best proved by its transformations of the rude and gross conceptions of a primitive age." (P. 76.)

"It (the change in the meaning of the word virgin) arose out of a misunderstood title which originally implied something very far from the thoughts of Christians, and the narrative, to a historic and therefore reverent mind, is by no means disparaged if taken to stand in some connection with the Egyptian theory of the divine generation of kings, and the Philonian belief in the divine generation of certain favored personages of the Old Testatment." (P. 90.)

Combining these scattered elements of explanation, we have the following lucid and convincing result. That the spirit of holiness in Israel (for no conceivable purpose that appears, except to frame a false adornment for the

person of the Messiah) purified a foul heathen myth into a pure Jewish-Christian one, without making it any the less a myth, using for the purpose of purification the innocence of the Christian writer, who could not understand that the word "virgin" in the myth which he was adopting had any meaning other than the pure and sacred one to which he had been accustomed.

Extended comment upon this explanation is unnecessary. I offer the following suggestions:—

1. An analogy in which part and counterpart diverge at every vital point cannot rightly be called an analogy at all. A myth which uses the word "virgin" in one sense cannot be the analogue of a narrative which uses it in exactly the opposite sense. Birth from a pure maiden, and birth from a polyandrous tribal mother, "who enjoys a measure of free love," are not parallels but contrasts.

2. The spirit of holiness in Israel does not inspire falsehoods. The statement that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary either is true or is not true. If it is not true, the Spirit of God did not inspire the record of it. Michael may be Marduk, but, according to the Scriptures, the Spirit of Holiness is not the Father of lies.

3. No man could possibly come into contact with the Babylonian and Arabian cults, and the rites connected therewith, and preserve his ignorance as to the meaning of the word "virgin." I can believe in such innocence, and do believe in it, but only in connection with a circle into which the foul breath of that monstrous heathen worship had never penetrated. But, in a man or a group of men, so exposed to the contamination of heathenism as to come under its fascination, such ignorance is inconceivable.

But we have had enough of this study. I have reserved for the end of this chapter a statement, which I am prepared to retract upon further evidence, but which

represents a very firm conviction based upon present knowledge. After a careful, laborious, and occasionally wearisome study of the evidence offered and the analogies urged, I am convinced that heathenism knows nothing of virgin births. Supernatural births it has without number, but never from a virgin in the New Testament sense and never without physical generation, except in a few isolated instances of magical births on the part of women who had not the slightest claim to be called virgins. In all recorded instances which I have been able to examine, if the mother was a virgin before conception took place she could not make that claim afterwards. The supernatural conception of Christ therefore was unique in several particulars :—

1. Christ's conception was in order to incarnation—heathen wonder-births were the result of incarnation.

2. The story combines a miraculous birth with a pure spiritualistic monotheism. Christ's birth was due to the creative agency of the unseen God—without the usual human mediation.

3. His mother was at the time of His conception and remained until after His birth a virgin. In short the conception of Jesus was as unique as the person thus brought into the world.

NOTE TO CHAPTER VI

There are three collateral items of evidence which of themselves go a long way toward demonstrating independence of heathen influence on the part of the Infancy narratives. These three items are the story of the Magi, the angelology of Luke, and the delineation of Mary. These items are especially interesting because they occur just at the points where heathen influence, if present, would be most clearly manifest.

In the narrative of the visit of the Magi, two difficulties in the way of a clear interpretation of the occurrence have been pointed out. In the first place, the meaning of the word (*μάγοι*) is obscure and confused. Whether these Magians were a nation, or a sect or order, it is practically impossible to decide. In the second place, the astronomical occurrence with which their

visit was connected has not been clearly explained. But altogether apart from this, there is one most remarkable quality exhibited in the story; namely, a certain aloofness or detachment of mind on the part of the writer. It has been strenuously debated whether the word Magi is used in a good or bad sense. As a matter of fact, it not used in either sense. "The Evangelist lays no stress, either on the value of the religion of the Magi in general or on its falsity, so that the attempts of many ancient commentators (Just. Chrys.; Theophil; cf. J. Lightfoot, Hor. Heb. ii, 36) to press the bad sense here, is as irrelevant to the story in the Gospels as the ironical fears of Strauss for the dogmatic consequences of a favorable construction. The newly-born King of the Jews receives homage from Eastern sages; their views (beyond the reference to the star, which does not imply any opinion on astrology in general) are not touched upon, and therefore neither praised nor blamed—a point in which Mt. ii contrasts with Sen. Ep. 58, where some critics have endeavored to find a parallel." (Benecke in H. B. D., vol. iii, p. 204 b. On the historicity of the narrative, see latter part of same article.)

In other words, the evangelist tells his story for what it is worth, without comment. Certainly there is no touch of heathen influence. He tells the story in the words of the astrologists, but his Hebrew leanings are apparent. There is no hint of the heathen attitude of superstitious reverence in the presence of the heavenly bodies. The star points the way to the King who is the sole object of worship. The Magians of the First Gospel are Jewish proselytes, not heathen, and the evangelist himself occupies the position of the Jewish Messianist who would, of course, refer such a celestial occurrence as described by the strangers to the Messiah. Every item in the story points away from heathen influence.

The same is true also of the angelology of Luke. The agency of angels in this narrative is made very prominent. It is the more remarkable, therefore, when we come to study the account closely, to find that it keeps so rigidly within the lines of the earlier Old Testament representation. According to the earlier documents of the Old Testament, angels were looked upon as the visible manifestations of God in human form. This was especially true of that mysterious person, who accepts divine honors, and is yet distinct from Jehovah, known as the angel of the Lord, the angel of the face, or the angel of the covenant. In regard to him Prof. Davidson (H. B. D., vol. i, p. 94 b) says: "As the manifestation called the angel of the Lord occurred chiefly in redemptive history, older theologians regarded it as an adumbration or premonition of the incarnation of the Second Person. This idea was just in so far as the angel of the Lord was a manifestation of J" on the earth in human form, and in so far as such temporary manifestations might seem the prelude to a permanent redemptive self-revelation in this form (Mal. iii, 12); but it was to go beyond the Old Testament, or at

least, beyond the understanding of Old Testament writers, to found in the manifestation distinctions in the Godhead. The only distinction implied is that between J" and J'' in manifestation."

This fundamental idea, that the angel is Jehovah in manifestation, branches in two directions, giving, on the one hand, the idea of a heavenly host, which expresses or symbolizes the Lord's manifested glory; and on the other, the idea of God's messengers which expresses God's active going forth to men. Under the one or the other of these two essentially related representations, almost all the earlier angelology of the Old Testament may be summed up.

In the book of Daniel, however, we find important modifications of the primitive angelology. As a result partly of an intensified sense of the divine transcendence, for "in Daniel God no longer speaks to men directly, but only through the intervention of angels, who even interpret His written word to men (ix, 20)," and partly, perhaps, owing to foreign influence, angels become more distinct and more prominent. They are given names, and arranged in the ranks of a graduated hierarchy, and in addition are given the task of wielding authority over the nations.

The development of angelology in later Judaism has been thus described: "The added prominence given to them (*i.e.*, angels) in the writings of such prophets as Ezekiel and Zechariah was undoubtedly due to the fact that, as Jehovah was then regarded as more exalted and farther removed from man, messengers were required to perform His will on earth and to communicate between Him and His people. Later, Judaism conceived of a highly developed hierarchy of angels (compare the beginning of the conception in the book of Zechariah and its full development in Daniel and Enoch). Although the names given to these heavenly beings are of Hebrew origin, the many close points of similarity to the Persian system suggests a more direct influence. Especially is this conclusion confirmed when we find that one of the names of an evil angel (Asmodeus—Aeshma—daeva) has been adopted from the Persian into Jewish thought (Book of Tobit)." (Kent, *Bab., Pers. and Grk. Periods in Hist. J. P. Series*, p. 256.)

Since the Jews already believed in the agency and personality of the angels, it is only necessary to believe that they adopted the foreign custom of naming them. It is not clear that they borrowed the names, while it is clear that the beings thus named preserved their original biblical characteristics and offices. As Dr. Plummer (Com. on Lk., p. 16) says: "It is one thing to admit that such names are of foreign origin, quite another to assert that the belief which they represent is an importation. Gabriel, the 'Man of God,' seems to be the representation of angelic ministry to man; Michael, 'who is like God,' the representative of angelic opposition to Satan. In Scripture Gabriel is the angel of mercy; Michael, the angel of

judgment. In Jewish legend, the reverse is the case, proving that the Bible does not borrow Jewish fables. In the Targum, Gabriel destroys Sennacherib's army; in the Old Testament, he comforts Daniel." However this may be, we have but to turn to the Lucan narrative to find ourselves in a thoroughly Old Testament atmosphere. The name Gabriel (which had undoubtedly become the common designation of the messenger of God) is used but to describe the "Angel of the presence" after the Old Testament manner. The angel says to Zacharias: "I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God (*ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ*)." Let the reader compare this statement with Isa. lxiii, 9, and follow the Hebrew words (מַלְאָךְ and פָּנֶה) through the Old Testament, and he will at once see how true to the deepest thought of the earlier revelation Luke's treatment is.

The statement of Dr. Grieve, therefore, is abundantly justified by the facts: "His (Gabriel's) connection with, far less his derivation from, any of the Seven Amshaspends of Zoroastrianism, the seven Babylonian planets, or the seven councilors at the Persian court (Ezra vii, 14) has not been made out. He is the messenger of J" a characteristic Jewish idea, though the number of the archangels—seven—may have been derived from foreign sources." (H. B. D., vol. ii, p. 75*b*.) Following the angelology of the section through we find it to be strictly of the Old Testament type. When the angels appear in the annunciation to the shepherds there is no naming, no numbering, no hint of hierarchical graduation among them. It is again the simple idea of the angel of the Lord as His messenger and the heavenly host connected with the manifestation of His glory. The angels are not unduly exalted, nor are they over emphasized. They do their work and disappear—there is no hint of anything like divine honor being paid to them. There is no touch of prevalent exaggeration so marked in the heathen angelologies. Still more striking, perhaps, than these, is the evidence afforded by the delineation of Mary in both Infancy narratives. If the mythological influence is present, it ought to exhibit itself here if anywhere. In the original myth the mother must have been as divine as the child[1]—a subject of almost equal interest. All the professed mythologists (Gunkel, Cheyne, etc.) attempt to prove that Mary is the equivalent of the tribal mother, or ancestral goddess, or some mythological figure of the sort.

Now according to the Infancy narrative, the mother of Jesus is caught up into a cycle of supernatural occurrences—she is the subject of experiences unique in human annals, and yet, where can there be found, in all the literature of the world such an exquisitely natural and human portraiture as is given of her in this same story? There is a haunting fascination about the brief record of her life which has led captive the imagination of

[1] Except as in Egypt, when the birth was meant to overcome the mother's lack of royal position.

many generations. The record which we have in the Gospels is tantalizingly brief and so deficient in details. In the narratives where she plays so great a part, she is named but sixteen times and then usually in mere statements of fact. And the account throughout is perfectly consistent—it is the genuine portrait of a living person. She is humble, devout, and submissive. Puzzled by what is happening to her, a little startled by the unusual character of her experiences, she is yet obedient to the will of God. She is represented not only in the Infancy sections, but in the New Testament as a whole, as a devout Jewish Messianist of the old type. But the point is, she is natural, human, domestic. There is no attempt to exaggerate her importance. There is no divine honor paid to her. When the visitors come they find the child with Mary His mother, but they worship the child. She is represented as the human instrument of God. Is it not perfectly clear that we have in this narrative no disguised heathen mythology but a truthful representation in harmony with the spirit of the Jewish people? Mary is no portentous mythological figure, but a simple human being, a devoted servant of God, a loving mother faithful to her duties as she understood them. The uniqueness of her historic task is the cause of her unique experience. There could be but one mother of the Messiah. But the uniqueness of her experience only serves to emphasize the naturalness of the portraiture of her character.

CHAPTER VII

THE EXEGETICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECTIONS

The review to which, in the preceding chapters, we have subjected the theories framed to explain the origin of the Infancy stories according to the mythical hypothesis does not tend to establish any very firm ground of confidence in the theories, nor in the hypothesis which they are supposed to support. The theories, all of which are confidently put forth as adequate to the solution of the problem, are separately open to serious objection and unitedly present, both in outline and in detail, a series of divergences, not to say contradictions, so absolute as to suggest something radically wrong in the general attitude toward the whole subject.

We have not one satisfactory, self-consistent explanation of the use, acceptance, and circulation of the Gospel story of Christ's birth in the early church. We have not one explanation which fairly meets and adjusts the facts of the case.

I do not propose at this point to make any further use of the weaknesses and contradictions of the mythical theories than to claim a hearing for the historic view. It is perfectly evident to an unprejudiced mind that the advocates of the mythical hypothesis in all its forms have failed to establish, beyond a reasonable doubt, their contention.

If these representative attempts of able and learned men to account for the Infancy documents, in the suppo-

sition of myth, can bring them into fundamental contradiction not only as to explanations, but as to the facts to be explained, the case lies far this side of a demonstration.[1]

The theory that the Gospel of the childhood is historical and trustworthy, has a right to be heard. It must be remembered, however, that the contradictions in the positive and constructive theories as to how the narratives arose does not entirely meet their negative work in discrediting the documents as worthy of confidence.

It is a much more difficult task than any yet undertaken, which I have set for myself in the present chapter; namely, to attempt the exegetical construction of the Infancy narratives.

It is not to be expected that any such attempt shall issue in the entire removal of difficulties. I hope to be able to show, however, that the acceptance of the narratives as substantially historical is attended with less difficulty than any other hypothesis which can be framed to meet the case.

Let us begin with the question: Did Jesus ever state clearly that He was born at Nazareth?[2]

The narrative of the birth at Bethlehem is said to be in contradiction to His own express statements, in which He claimed Nazareth as His native town.

This argument is based upon the statement attributed to Jesus by Mark (vi, 4): "And Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." This same statement occurs in Luke (iv, 24, 25). If this were found in any document not under suspicion, would it have been interpreted as anything more than a general reference to the place of His residence, and the residence

[1] See also Note A. Historical Review of the Discussion.

[2] On this see Neander, L. C., p. 28, note. (Eng. Tr. 1851).

of His family? How long, in the first century, did it take for a man to acquire a residence? Jesus was brought to Nazareth as a child, and had lived there for the period of nearly thirty years; He might certainly speak of it as "His own country," even though He was born at Bethlehem.

Besides, He was making use of a popular proverb. It would be altogether unreasonable to expect that he should accompany such an allusion with an explanation of the fact that He was in reality born at Bethlehem. Such a statement would be awkward and meaningless. It is to be doubted whether He even thought of it in that connection. He certainly had no memory of the stay at Bethlehem, and no conceivable motive for mentioning it.

That there is no essential contradiction between the statement of Jesus and the narrative of the birth at Bethlehem, is seen in Luke's narrative, in which he introduces the incident at Nazareth by the very carefully chosen phrase: "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up."[1]

This objection is too frivolous to be worthy of notice, were it not for the fact that it is related to another of much greater importance. Why did Jesus say nothing about His supernatural birth? There were numberless instances, when, in answer to the taunts of His enemies, it would have been natural and proper for Him to have made a clear and unequivocal assertion of His unique birth. Why did He not make it? I retort with another question: How could He? What good would it have done either to the disciples, or to the public? What effect would the announcement have had upon those, who were already blinded with prejudice, except to intensify that prejudice and to put into their hands a weapon, which could be used not only against Jesus, but against His

[1] Luke iv, 16.

household? Weiss is perfectly correct, when he says, "It is a most extraordinary demand to require Jesus to point out the miracle of His birth to the masses of the people, who remained unbelieving in spite of the miracles wrought among them daily, or to require the apostles to do so, who proclaimed the resurrection and exaltation of of Jesus."

With this question, is bound up the still larger one of the time and manner in which this secret of Joseph's household was published to the world.

We have abundant ground for holding that the documents embodied in the Infancy narratives are old by comparison with the rest of the Gospels. This does not definitely determine the date of their admittance into the completed Gospels, nor the date when the information came into the hands of the disciples. At this point, we will take for granted the statement confidently put forth by nearly every critic on the negative side of this question —that during the lifetime of Jesus, it was believed not only by the people at large, but by the circle of disciples, that He was the son of Joseph and Mary.

Along with this statement, I will place another which I believe to be beyond the reach of successful denial. If the story of Jesus' birth is authentic at all, it came with more or less directness from the immediate family into which He was born. If the story is entitled to the least credence, it can rest ultimately upon no other authority than the word of Joseph and Mary.

The argument adduced by many writers of the life of Jesus, for attributing at least Luke's account to Mary, can be broken only by the supposition of deliberate imposture on the part of the writer.[1]

[1] See Lange, L. J., vol. 1, p. 256; Ramsay, *Was Christ born at Bethlehem?* chap. iv.

Now taking for granted again for a moment that the story is actually authentic on the basis of the statement that Mary or Joseph must have been the ultimate authority, we can see why the fact should not have been known during the lifetime of Jesus.

More than this, it is difficult to see how the fact that the supernatural birth of Jesus was not believed during His life, can be accounted for on any other basis. Had it originated as a myth due to a popular impression of His Messianic greatness, it would naturally have taken its rise and passed into circulation at the time when the popular enthusiasm had reached its height, and had not been dampened by the persistent hostility of the Jewish authorities.[1]

But if the family of Jesus supplied the authority upon which the story was finally published, we can readily understand why it should have been kept a secret during the lifetime of Jesus.

Mary was beset with difficulties of the most practical kind. She could not tell the child Jesus of the wonders connected with His birth without incurring the risk of destroying the naturalness of His growth, and the simplicity of His self-consciousness. She could not tell the other children of the home of the circumstances attending the birth of her first child for obvious reasons. She could not very well make public the story without danger of awakening enmities, which would have imperiled His life. In other words, she was absolutely compelled to silence.

All this was changed by His death. He was gone from her; the family was broken up; the malice of His enemies could touch Him no more. She would be impelled to talk

[1] If the story was not originated at this time, it must have arisen (on the mythical hypothesis) very late; viz., after the resurrection and ascension had made Christ's transcendence clear to His disciples.

about Him, to review His whole life, and to recall and recount the circumstances connected with Him.[1]

Against the positive reasons for connecting this story with Mary, certain arguments have been brought forward. The principal one is drawn from the perplexity of Mary in view of what the boy Jesus said in reply to her question: "Why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." Jesus answered: "How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them."[2] It is asserted that this verse not only disconnects Mary from the Infancy narrative, because it exhibits her in an attitude of perplexity in regard to an utterance to which she possessed the key in the memories of her Son's birth, (which she is said to have kept in her heart) but is clearly representative of a tradition dating from the time when the miraculous birth was not believed.

The use of this verse in such a connection suggests some questions. The sentence contains a statement concerning thoughts in the minds of Joseph and Mary, which could be known only to a novelist or to one who had received information from the persons whose minds and thoughts were thus unveiled. That sentence was written by one who had talked with Mary, or had received a document from Mary through some one to whom it had been intrusted, or else by a writer, who was so far from the event as merely to imagine for himself the feelings which Mary might have been supposed to have in the presence of Christ's extraordinary self-consciousness. In the former case, it vouches for the historicity of the entire

[1] Note that this applies to the publication of the story. The formation of the story is evidently earlier, since the shadow of the Cross is absent.

[2] Luke ii, 48–50.

incident and brings the writer into intimate contact with the source of authority; in the latter, it is a purely literary device and represents no tradition whatever.

It is absurd on the face of it that a "literary expert"[1] like Luke should embody two contradictory traditions in the same account when in the fourth chapter he is so careful to introduce what occurs at Nazareth by a phrase which should carefully guard the fact, stated earlier, that Jesus was born at Bethlehem.

This whole argument about divergent traditions is based upon a misinterpretation of the phrase, which Luke twice repeats in a single chapter (ii, 19, 51) that Mary kept these sayings in her heart, pondering them. Does this statement imply that Mary understood the meaning of all that was happening, and had arrived at such clear convictions that nothing extraordinary in the subsequent life of her Son could surprise or puzzle her? Indeed the phrase implies quite the contrary. It is perfectly clear that she was greatly perplexed by the whole affair, and every new incident added to her wonder and perplexity.

In fact, the passages which are said to be in contradiction, are parts of one consistent representation that the events before and after the birth of Jesus made Mary deeply thoughtful and profoundly perplexed, so that she kept revolving all the facts in her mind in order to compass their meaning.[2]

It is also alleged that the attempts of Mary and the rest of the family to interfere with the Messianic career of Jesus, implies that they had no inkling of the supernatural events connected with His birth. It seems to me that this is a peculiarly inept and futile piece of criticism, in that it reads the evidence backward.

Mary labored to the end of Jesus' life under certain mental limitations. She occupied the Old Testament view-

[1] Soltau's phrase. [2] Cf. Luke i, 29 with ii, 19, 51.

point exhibited in the Infancy document, and never passed beyond it until after the death of Jesus. There was nothing in the circumstances of Jesus' birth to lead her to expect in Him anything but the fulfillment of the theocratic hopes of the circle in which she moved. Her conduct toward Jesus[1] cannot better be explained than by the supposition that her expectations in Him were disappointed. She was a thorough Hebrew and, when she saw her Son coming into conflict with the authorities of her nation and turning aside into the narrow pathway that led toward inevitable death, she, like the disciples, was troubled, perplexed, grieved, and driven by her painful solicitude to acts that were indiscreet and unpleasant.[2] There is absolutely nothing here that argues that Mary did not know the incidents recorded by Matthew and Luke—certainly nothing that has any weight compared with the positive reasons for believing that Mary was herself the authority upon which Luke based his story. Moreover, the attitude of Mary to Jesus at the wedding in Cana implies an expectation of something wonderful from her Son which the events of the silent period at Nazareth do not seem to justify. Whence came her evident Messianic expectations?[3]

Before going further, I wish to consider a little this question of a divergent tradition concerning the manner of Christ's birth. It is alleged that there was a continuous tradition, dating from the lifetime of Christ and extending onward indefinitely into the second century, when it becomes a strenuous contention that Jesus was begotten and born just as other men. This, it is maintained, is the consistent, continuous, genuine, apostolic tradition.

Now I admit that there were two traditions, one current popularly, and among the disciples during the lifetime of Jesus, and the other in Jewish-Christian circles dating

[1] John ii, 3, 5. [2] Matt. xii, 47. Mk. iii, 31. [3] John ii, 3–5.

from the promulgation of the Gospel of Matthew, that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary. These two traditions were one in the opinion held concerning the origin of Jesus, but absolutely different in the ground upon which the opinion rested, and in the apostolic standing of the persons who held it.

In the first instance, the opinion, which was common to the disciples during the lifetime of Jesus, rested upon natural inference from the relationship of Jesus to the household of Joseph and Mary, in the absence of authoritative information to the contrary. The later opinion rested upon dogmatic prepossession, was held in opposition to definite teaching, and was inextricably interwoven with heretical views as to the person and work of Christ. This opinion was held first by Ebionite Judaizers,[1] who were the bitter and relentless foes of Paul, and later by Gnostics,[2] represented by Cerinthus, who was so strenuously opposed to John at Ephesus.

It will take very positive evidence to convince any thoughtful mind that Paul shared the views of those men, who forced him to spend so many years in the unwelcome task of controversy, who embittered his life and did all they could to destroy his work, who were present to his mind under the threefold representation—"The dogs . . . the evil workers . . . the concision."[3]

It is no less difficult to believe that John agreed in the denial of the supernatural birth with Cerinthus, against whose heresies he expended the very last strength of mind and body, in sincere loyalty to the person and dignity of his Lord.

It is simply inconceivable that any apostle, or any disciple of an apostle, or any Christian, who held the faith in

[1] See Church Histories under Ebionites.

[2] See Ch. Histories under Gnostics. [3] Phil. iii, 2.

its entirety, should have become a sharer in such views.

The belief that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary does not represent the mature views of any known apostle.

The statement that this belief constitutes "the true Gospel, as transmitted to us by the apostles and their school in the Apostolic age," [1] is not only without adequate basis, but also violates every probability of the case.

If it be true that the belief in the natural derivation of Jesus from Joseph was general during the lifetime of Christ, we have to account for the change of opinion on the part of at least the dominant element among the apostles and their disciples, who were under the influence of John and acquainted with the family of Jesus—a change of opinion which resulted in the firm establishment of the doctrine in the official documents and formal confessions of the church by the close of the first century.

Moreover, this revolution was accomplished in spite of continuous and influential opposition, and in the midst of controversy. In addition to all this, we have no hint that in the controversy any genuine facts were brought forward, such as negative criticism assumes that there must have been, but only *a priori* objections such as that of Cerinthus that it was "impossible." [2]

In view of these considerations, that early and authoritative tradition concerning the natural birth of Jesus fades away, and loses much of its coherence.

It may safely be asserted that there is more of a historic process evident here than can possibly be accounted for on any mythical hypothesis.

We next come to the question: Why were there two accounts at all? To this, the answer is to be made that there are two contrasted phases of the historic event, one

[1] Soltau, p. 65. [2] See Lange, vol. i, p. 281; Strauss, L. J., vol. i, p. 182.

of which may be called the Jewish-theocratic phase, the other, the broadly human or universal phase.

The birth of Christ had a relationship to prophecy, and a significance in connection with the historic hope of the Jews; it had also a connection with universal history, and a special significance for all mankind.[1]

These two contrasted sides of this historic occurrence would compel two very different modes of exposition.[2]

This they have received at the hands of Matthew and Luke. I venture the assertion that the accounts do not differ from each other more than any two accounts of a series of related events, told under the influence of a different dominant interest and for different readers.

It is to be seen at a glance that Luke's account would

[1] The difficulty involved in the existence of two accounts really goes a little deeper than this, but it is met by precisely similar considerations. On the supposition that the two accounts are both derived from family narratives, why should there be two stories differing so much in details? To begin with, are we sure that the two narratives differ so greatly as we are accustomed to think?

It has seemed to me that every formidable difficulty involved in the two stories is met by the simple and natural consideration that Luke's narrative follows the natural order of events, and Matthew's treats of an episode or group of episodes entirely aside from the main events. Behind the fact that the events narrated by Luke were those which would naturally appeal to him, and that the events in Matthew are those which would most deeply interest him, lies the deeper fact that the events told by Matthew are those which would naturally interest Joseph, and those of Luke constitute the real viewpoint of Mary. Joseph was the head, guide, and protector of the family and would naturally remember and relate the incident in which the safety of the child intrusted to him was imperiled. On the other hand, Mary was protected, and in the safety of her husband's care gave very little heed to outside events. It was the great fact which made its impression upon her mind. The goodness of God and the greatness of her promised Son made up the sum of her thoughts. The natural history of the documents and their sources lies upon the surface. They represent a twofold viewpoint on the part of the evangelists and also the members of Joseph's household.

[2] See Weiss, L. J., vol. i, p. 224.

not fit into a scheme of Matthew's Gospel at all, nor would it suit his purpose. Matthew's one undeviating purpose was to interpret Christ to his countrymen, and it was his peculiar delight to take items in Christ's life naturally offensive to a Jew, and lift them up in such a way into relationship with the theocratic hope as to make them acceptable to one with Jewish prepossessions. In accordance with this predominant interest, he takes incidents from the carefully cherished traditions of the childhood —the birth from a virgin, the birth at Bethlehem, the attempt of Herod and the flight into Egypt, the residence at Nazareth, every item of which, except the birth at Bethlehem, would be offensive to a strict Jew—and so illumines them with prophetic lights as to make them shine with all the brightness of that hope which had endured since Abraham's day.

Of this character, there is nothing in Luke's account. He is so true to his sources that their strong Hebraic character shines through the Greek, but he has nothing to say of prophecy, and gives no heed to purely Jewish prejudices. More serious still, he leaves the marvelous story absolutely unguarded. He speaks of Mary as the betrothed of Joseph,[1] and says nothing concerning their subsequent marriage. Indeed, Luke's account exhibits throughout a naïve unconsciousness that the story could give offense, evidently trusting to its transparent simplicity and purity to lift it above suspicion.

Matthew's account, on the contrary, in accordance with his general apologetic aim, exhibits the definite purpose to guard the tradition at every point. He shows that Joseph was as definitely chosen to the task of guarding the honor of Mary and the safety of Jesus as Mary was chosen to become the mother of the Messiah. He brings Joseph for-

[1] Luke ii, 5.

ward as the representative of the house of David, and uses his genealogy in the assured confidence that this reputed descent assures the right of Jesus to David's throne, and also establishes His unstained origin. This method of proclaiming to the Jewish public the miraculous birth of the Messiah formed about its central mystery a defense proof against misunderstanding and even calumny, except on the part of those who already hated Christ with bitterness, and were without scruple in seeking weapons against Him. I maintain that the whole character and purpose of Matthew's statement is as strong a guarantee as one could possibly find of its genuineness and authenticity.

The assertion that the genealogy, and the account of the miraculous birth, are fragments of divergent traditions, loosely pieced together, seems to me to exhibit an almost hopeless misunderstanding of the situation. The two apparently contradictory statements are united by the purpose of the narrator, who has seen the bearing of the one upon the other, and in his skillful apologetic use makes the faithfulness of Joseph a defense for the miraculous birth.

In Luke's account, which, in this respect at least, presupposes Matthew's, there is no apologetic purpose evident. He gives the intimate, domestic side of the occurrences in a manner altogether unexplainable, except upon the understanding that he had in his possession what he supposed to be direct family reminiscences. One element of its perennial charm lies in the straightforward, unconscious simplicity with which the story is told. And it must be confessed that its purity has been its own defense, no less effective to those who do not share the Jewish feeling than Matthew's more formal and elaborate method. We have then a reasonable explanation of the existence of two different accounts of the events connected with the

infancy of Jesus. How far can the two accounts be fairly harmonized? In statements of fact, the two accounts converge upon six points,—the birth from a virgin, the name Jesus, the birth at Bethlehem, the Davidic descent, the reign of Herod, and the residence at Nazareth. Of these six concurrent statements, the Davidic descent and the residence at Nazareth and the general date are not questioned. The accounts diverge in the matter of the genealogies, on the point of the residence at Nazareth previous to the birth of Jesus, and in certain positive statements made by Luke and omitted by Matthew. In addition to this, we have the difficulty of adjusting statements like those of Paul concerning the Davidic descent, which is supposedly dependent upon inheritance through the male line, with the assertion of the virgin birth. We are thus led into the very heart of the difficulties which are urged against the accounts.

Let us take up first the knotty question of the genealogies. In the attempt to solve the problem presented by the genealogical lists, I shall lay down a series of propositions, which seem to me individually defensible, and which as a whole lead to very clear results and satisfactory conclusions.

The first proposition is that the genealogies are not vitally essential to the general discussion. They have been inserted in the account to prove the Davidic descent of Jesus. That fact stands secure without the genealogies. The general fact of family connection and descent is one thing; the detailed exhibition and proof of that connection by genealogical lists is quite another. Family pedigrees are proverbially uncertain. And one who has ever had any dealings with long lists of names is aware of the difficulty of keeping them correct. In the ancient days of copying manuscripts, it must have been well-nigh impos-

sible to keep the genealogies free from error. It would not be surprising, therefore, if the genealogy of Jesus should present many difficulties. It may be that the difficulties are insuperable with our present imperfect knowledge. But this does not shake the certainty that Jesus was descended from David. The proof for this is overwhelming. As Lange says: "As far as the relation of the genealogies in Matthew and Luke to the doctrine of Christ's descent from David is concerned, it must first be firmly laid down, that this doctrine is entirely independent of their construction. In a genuine and powerful family tradition, the tradition is not supported by the genealogy, but the genealogy by the tradition."[1]

Professor Bacon is unfavorable to the historic accuracy of the genealogies, and cannot be said to be very firmly attached to the belief that Jesus was actually of Davidic descent, yet he makes a strong exhibition of the reasons for believing that the acceptance of that belief was practically universal during the lifetime of Jesus and immediately after. He says:[2] "If the progress of critical and exegetical science has shown, on the one side, the futility of all harmonistic theories for rescuing the authority of the pedigrees, it has more than compensated for the loss, by establishing, with equal certainty, the acceptance of the fact of the Davidic descent of Jesus by Himself, His contemporaries, and His immediate followers."

It is not necessary to exhibit the proofs of this in detail. It is admitted with practical unanimity that Jesus could never have won any recognition of His claim to the throne of His ancestors without furnishing to His contemporaries convincing evidence of His heirship. The real difficulty, however, lies deeper, in that it appears as if this conceded claim rested entirely upon the reputed relationship to

[1] L. J., vol. i, p. 301, note. [2] Hastings, B. D., vol. ii, p. 138.

Joseph, and collides fatally with the doctrine of the virgin birth. This question has yet to be met. The certainty that Jesus sprang from the family of David does not carry with it assurance concerning the accuracy of the genealogical lists. There were evidently discrepant lists of relationships and descents within the same family. This seems to account for one discrepancy between Matthew and Luke: "according to Matthew, Zerubbabel, the son of Salalthiel, was through Solomon, descended from the kingly line (i, 7-12), while Luke represents him as springing from an allied branch connected, through Nathan, with David (iii, 27-31).

No attempt of apologetics or criticism to resolve or explain this difference can meet with much success. All that we can ascertain is, that a discrepant genealogical tradition has been employed here, the circumstances of whose origin we are no longer in a position to indicate with certainty."[1] This discrepancy, however, involves us in uncertainty as to how the lineage of Jesus is traceable to David—it does not touch the fact. However the genealogies may diverge, the Davidic origin of Jesus would still be secure. If one or both genealogies were in part or in whole incorrect, we should still be compelled to assume, on the basis of the evidence, that Jesus was the son of David, although the attempt to prove Him such by the genealogical lists was a failure.

My second proposition is that lists, which differ so utterly that only two names are the same in both lists between David and Jesus, cannot be interpreted as imperfect attempts to embody the same ancestral lines. The discrepancy is too great. If the lists were nearly alike, differing here and there in a name, we might look upon them as imperfect attempts to accomplish the same thing, but

[1] Weiss, L. J., vol. i, p. 217.

when they differ altogether, with the exceptions of two names, this supposition is too difficult. We may account with Weiss for the divergence back from Zerubbabel and Salalthiel as due to "discrepant genealogical traditions." Is it reasonable to suppose that the divergence on this side the meeting point is due also to a different tradition? This, to say the least, is a most remarkable coincidence. Moreover, Matthew's genealogy is constructed for a definite purpose. The theory advocated by Lord Hervey and others, so far as it relates to Matthew, may be accepted, that the first evangelist attempts to trace the *theocratic birthright of Jesus* through Joseph to David.

This fits in with his apologetic purpose, for which the adoptive relationship to Joseph would be entirely sufficient.[1] Bacon holds that in the use of the word ἐγέννησεν, Matthew means "actual physical descent," and that he has mistakenly assumed that the royal succession, as was usually true, was by natural descent from father to son.

This appears to me very doubtful, for it is likely that Matthew is simply following the genealogical formula, but, if true, it is not a serious matter—the inheritance is a reality whether relationship in the succession is real or merely legal.[2] The whole character of the genealogy

[1] Hastings B. D., Art. Genealogy, vol. ii, p. 139.

[2] Holtzmann (L. J., p. 82) argues: "If Jesus was not the son of Joseph according to the flesh, both of the genealogies fall to the ground. For the essential purpose of a genealogy is to show blood relationship." In like manner, Pere Didon (*Jesus Christ*, vol. ii, pp. 421 *seq.*) holds that "the Christ was to be something more than the formal heir of the great King; He was to be actually of the blood of David as well as of the blood of Abraham. Of this, I think, there cannot be the smallest doubt."

Irenæus argues (Con. Haer., Bk iii, Chap. 21, sec. 9), that if Jesus had been derived from Joseph He could not have been the heir, for Jechoniah (Matt. i, 12) had been disinherited. The passage upon which Irenæus bases his contention is Jeremiah xxii, 28, in which it is stated that Jechoniah (Coniah in Jer.) should be written childless, "a man that shall not

lends strong confirmation to Godet's contention that Matthew's Infancy section is not to be interpreted as a histor-

prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah (ver. 30).

This does not prove that Jechoniah did not have children (see H. B. D., vol. ii, p. 557), therefore does not touch upon the difficulty raised by Holtzmann. But whether childless or not Jechoniah was the last king of David's line. . . . On the legal genealogies Shealtiel who was descended from David through his son Nathan is counted as his son, but neither he nor Zerubbabel prospered so as to sit on David's throne, etc. (see Speaker's Commentary, Jeremiah *ad loc.*). The question remains, however, whether the derivation of Christ through the disinherited Jechoniah would not in Jewish eyes constitute as much an element of offense as a break in the blood relationship. This point in the genealogy should make one pause before asserting that in all particulars the gospel genealogies are made in conformity with Jewish prejudice. There is at any rate a question whether Shealtiel was anything more than the legal or adoptive son of Jechoniah. It must be conceded that in troubled times such as preceded, accompanied, and followed the Captivity, family lines would be endangered, and adoptive or putative relationships would be necessarily employed to bridge gaps in blood relationship. The appearance of the two names, Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, in both genealogies points to something of this character. We are thus afforded escape in one direction from the difficulty urged by Holtzmann.

In point of fact the legal relationship of Jesus to Joseph would satisfy the requirement of the average Jewish mind.

Holtzmann also urges that "it is clear that there existed no certain knowledge as to the descent of Jesus from the house of David."

It may be that this statement is correct, though it is extremely improbable. On the other hand it is beyond question that there was among the disciples, both of the apostolic age and the age following, the practically unanimous conviction that Jesus was of the house of David. (See H. D. B., Article Genealogy N. T.) Whence was this conviction derived, and upon what did it rest? In addition to what is said in the text I wish to suggest certain other considerations. In the first place, it is probable that the belief in the Davidic origin of Jesus rested upon the general knowledge among the disciples that the family of Joseph belonged to the house of David.

In the second place, it is undoubtedly the fact that the belief in the Davidic origin of Jesus rested upon the same authority as the Infancy narrative in general, and was connected with the sources upon which this is based.

In the third place, the conclusion seems inevitable that the general diffusion among believers of the belief that Jesus was born of the house of David

ical chronicle, but as "a didactic exposition," [1] embodying historical incidents.

This seems to me fairly to explain the character and construction of Matthew's genealogy. What of Luke's?

must have been the accompaniment or result of the publication of the Gospels. In view of these more than probable connections we are shut up to two conclusions. Either the legal relationship between Jesus and Joseph was sufficient to satisfy the minds of the disciples, or else Mary was considered a descendant of David. It seems to me that both these things are probably true. In view of the presence of Jechoniah in the genealogy, as well as other features of Matthew's version, it is extremely probable that the adoptive fatherhood of Joseph was entirely sufficient to justify and guarantee Jesus' royal position. In addition to this, certain peculiarities of Luke's genealogy lend force to the conclusion that Mary was of the house of David. In support of this belief is the very old and general tradition to that effect. The relationship of certain statements in John's Gospel to this question is, perhaps, deserving of a little fuller discussion that it has received in the text. Holtzmann says: "The Johannine Gospel says distinctly, that in Jerusalem exception was taken to Jesus' Galilæan origin: 'Hath not the Scripture said,' etc.,—(Jno. vii, 42). Yet the evangelist does not by so much as a single word say that Jesus really was descended from David or that He actually was born in Bethlehem. Of these things he knows nothing or else he considers the tradition which relates it to be false." Now, this position is certainly untenable. It makes of John a most unaccountable exception to his Christian brethren to suppose that he was ignorant of the tradition or in opposition to it. Certainly if John had been a disbeliever in the tradition, he would surely have indicated by so much as a word that the whole contention of the Jews that Jesus must be of the house of David and a Bethlehemite by birth, was absurd and unnecessary. A glance at the story will show that no such meaning can be attached to it. John simply *gives one half of a debate.* Some said, "This is the Christ." But others opposed this on the ground that Jesus was a Galilæan, whereas the Christ must be of the house of David. Now John, without pausing to give the perfectly obvious retort to this objection, simply sums up the incident by saying, "So there arose a division in the multitude because of him" (ver. 43. Why this omission? Because it was a commonplace of the Gospel narrative. Every person for whom John was writing could supply the missing answer

[1] Com. on Luke, Standard Am. Ed., 1881, p. 95. Note also mnemonic quality of Matthew's genealogy—five groups of fourteen names each—corresponding to five groups of sayings introduced by formulæ. See Matt. vii, 28; xix, 1; xxvi, 1, etc, Cf. Morrison, Com. on Matt., p. 7.

It is not surprising that many have held that this latter is Mary's. To give her genealogy would be in harmony with the general character of Luke's narrative of the Infancy in that the entire story otherwise centers about her.

out of the other Gospels. John gives the incident simply as a sample of the arguments used against Christ, and undoubtedly as an exhibition of the narrow-minded ineptness shown by the Judæans at every point of the debate.

In this connection, Schmiedel's remarks (Ency. Biblica, Art. Gospels 24) are worthy of note. He comments on Westcott's remark on Jno. vii, 42, "There is a tragic irony in the fact that the condition which the objectors ignorantly assumed to be unsatisfied, *i. e.*, birth in Bethlehem, was actually satisfied." He says: "Are we to believe that Jesus knew that the condition was satisfied, and yet left the objectors in their ignorance so as to keep back from them the fulfillment of God's word, making Himself responsible for the tragic consequences?" In answer to this, it is needful to say nothing more than this. There would be no "tragic irony" involved in the incident unless the objectors had every opportunity to acquaint themselves with the facts, and declined to make use of them. There is no reason to suppose, (indeed there is every reason to suppose the contrary) that the disciples made no answer to the objection thus urged. John doesn't mention their answer because there is no need. He is simply recording *objections*, not the answers to them, especially answers that were perfectly obvious. There is no hint in the record of a conspiracy of silence on the part of anybody. The incident has no significance whatever apart from the supposition that the objectors might have known the truth if they wished to. Moreover, why should anybody suppose that Jesus Himself had any part in the debate on either side?

John records what the multitude said about Him—not what was said to Him. That this objection to His Messiahship was persistently and publicly urged, is evidence enough that the question must have been honestly and openly met. I have elsewhere urged that no Jewish inquirer concerning the claims of Jesus could have been satisfied without a settlement of this point. The disciples must have been convinced, and having been themselves convinced, it is not likely that they would have entered into a conspiracy of silence to keep other men from the truth. The tragic irony in the incident consists of the stolid unwillingness of the Jewish objectors to be convinced—a characteristic exhibited in more ways than one during this portion of John's narrative. This being so the reader can judge for himself of the force of Schmiedel's statement: "This at all events cannot be disputed, that John represents the disciples as believing in a Jesus of Nazareth, whilst the unbelieving Pharisees demand a Jesus of Bethlehem." A statement wider of the mark, it would be difficult to imagine.

Godet argues[1] from the absence of the article from the name Joseph in Luke's genealogy: 1. That this name belongs rather to the sentence introduced by Luke. 2. That the genealogical document which he consulted began with the name of Heli. 3. And consequently that this piece was not originally the genealogy of Jesus or Joseph, but of Heli. This brings the name Joseph in the list into a merely explanatory relation to the name Jesus and connects Jesus directly with his grandfather Heli, the mother's name being supplied by the name Joseph. The sentence would then read: Jesus, as was supposed the son of Joseph, being the son of Heli. This avoids the difficulty connected with the absence of the article from the name of Joseph, which definitely sets him outside the succession.[2]

This ingenious theory, which has many great names to support it, is irrevocably shattered upon one simple consideration, that it compels us to attribute more than one meaning to the word ὑιος in a single sentence. The other objections to the theory that Luke is giving Mary's genealogy may be successfully met; this one seems to me fatal. What is the result then? By the breaking down of this theory, are we forced back upon the other one—that Luke is attempting to repeat the list which Matthew gives, and succeeds so badly that he gets but two names the same? If we are forced to this alternative, then of course the value of the genealogies is lost. But we are not forced to any such dismal choice. Let me throw into the form of separate propositions, the considerations which must enter into the explanation: 1. The almost complete divergence of the lists. 2. The certainty that Matthew's list was constructed to establish Jesus' theocratic birth-

[1] Commentary on Luke, Am. Ed., p. 128. See *Thinker*, Jan. 1895.

[2] See good summary of this position, L. J. Lange, vol. i, p. 302, quotation from Hoffman.

right as the Jewish Messiah. 3. The presumptive likelihood that Luke would not share Matthew's interest in the theocratic birthright. 4. The certainty that the establishment of the birthright was not the purpose of Luke's genealogy, as is sufficiently shown by his use of the genealogy back of Abraham, and by his tracing of the Davidic line to Nathan, who was not the heir of the promise. 5. The omission of the article in connection with the name of Joseph, which calls attention to a break in the genealogy, and brings Heli into immediate connection with Jesus. 6. The certainty that lists which exhibit the transmission of the theocratic birthright, would be guarded with such care that a divergence like that between Matthew's list and Luke's list would be impossible. 7. The certainty that in the family of David there would be not only a list, exhibiting the transmission of the ideal birthright from one generation to another, but also a civic list containing the names of the successive heirs of land or other family properties—in other words a tax list. 8. The distinct possibility, if not probability, that Joseph and Mary were akin. This would account for the fact otherwise difficult of explanation, that Joseph was accompanied by Mary on his visit to Bethlehem at the time of the enrollment. 9. If Joseph and Mary were both heirs of family property, even merely presumptive or possible heirs, their names would appear in conjunction upon the civic register, and the civil genealogy of one would be that of the other. 10. The appearance of Mary's relationship to the general line would constitute the value and interest of the list, so far as Luke is concerned.

It seems to me that in the considerations outlined above, we have the materials for a conclusion concerning the genealogies, at once rational and satisfactory.[1] The ex-

[1] On the question of the genealogies, see Lessons on Life of Jesus in Hand-books for Bible Classes—Lesson i, note by Scrymgeour.

treme likelihood that the lists meant something to those who prepared them and accepted them as a part of the Gospels, should lead one to give fair consideration to any reasonable hypothesis which explains the facts and also tends to establish their correctness and authority. Luke does not attempt to repeat Matthew's list. There was no reason why he should. The human rather than the theocratic relationship of Jesus interested him. And had he been ever so deeply interested in the theocratic inheritance, Matthew had established it sufficiently well, except in this one particular; if Luke could also have shown that Jesus was the heir of the Promise through Mary His mother, as well as through Joseph His reputed father, perhaps he would have done so. But this he could not do. In his researches, he was shown Joseph's civic list, upon which Mary appears as a kinswoman and heir. This interested Luke as did everything concerning Mary, and he adopted the list, merely conforming to etiquette by refraining from the direct mention of Mary's name. In place of doing that, he omitted the article from Joseph's name thus throwing the attention over to Heli, Mary's father and Joseph's uncle, joint heir with Joseph's father in the properties, if such were still in existence.

This accounts for all the facts, the divergence in the lists, Luke's interest in the one he chose, the omission of the article, and Mary's trip to Bethlehem. It also opens the way to an explanation of another puzzling fact. The appearance of the two names which are identical in both lists. It can be explained on the ground that at the time of the return the real heirs of the land were absent, and two kinsmen, who were prominent in the return, acted for the absent heirs, and thus appeared in the lists.[1] The

[1] I am indebted to some writer for this suggestion, but the reference has escaped me.

use of the words "son of" in Luke's list is to be explained by Luke's understanding that a succession of that kind would pass from father to son, which might or might not be correct in every instance. This general conclusion to which all considerations which bear upon the question point is none the less satisfactory that it shows Mary to have been of the house of David though out of the strictly theocratic line.[1]

One other argument on the subject, which is really an attempt to carry the question by a coup, must be considered. In connection with the apparent discrepancy between the use of Joseph's genealogy and the doctrine of the virgin birth, it is said that "recent research has suggested, that, to the contemporary Jewish mind, there was no incompatibility. Joseph might be, not merely the putative or adoptive father of Jesus, but the real father—at the same time that the birth was due solely to "the power of the Most High" (Lk. i, 35). Isaac, in like manner, was spoken of as "God-begotten" (cf. Rom. iv, 17–20; Heb. xi, 12), without any idea of denying the reality of his relation to Abraham. The ὡς ἐνομίζετο is, therefore, to be attributed to the evangelist as against the source."[2]

This explanation is dealt with more in detail in the last chapter of the book. At this point, it is only necessary to say that it denies distinctiveness to the idea which is the formative principle of the entire Infancy section, and is flatly contradicted by the evident fact that Luke, and presumably Matthew, maintained a clear distinction between the origin of the men of promise, like Isaac and John the Baptist, and the miraculous origin of Jesus.

I have accepted this interpretation of Luke's genealogy,

[1] Justin Martyr believed that Mary was of Davidic origin; see Dial., cap. c.

[2] Bacon in Hastings B. D., vol. i, p. 140 a.

not merely because it tends to establish its historicity, for which one need not be particularly solicitous, but because it is more in accord with the general character of Luke's Gospel, and satisfies more of the facts than any other explanation.

My third proposition is that, in the minds of the Jewish disciples of Jesus at least, the most important item in the whole matter of His human relationship would be His kinship with the family of David in the royal line. In competition with this, the virgin birth would have no relative standing. If the two doctrines were incompatible, and one had to be sacrificed, it would necessarily be the virgin birth. There could have been no conceivable motive in their minds for retaining the virgin birth at the cost of the Davidic origin.

The earliest Ebionite objection to the virgin birth seems to have taken the form of an argument that the Messiah must be of Davidic origin on both sides. In this argument, there is at least an implied contention that the putative fatherhood of Joseph was not enough to satisfy the case. The whole Ebionite contention, however, shows clearly that the virgin birth would have been unhesitatingly rejected by all of Jewish antecedents who were jealous for the Davidic ancestry of Jesus, unless there were some way to reconcile the birth statement with this favorite tenet. The conjunction of the two statements in our documents, proves either that Joseph's adoptive fatherhood, as interpreted by Matthew, was satisfactory to all but the most extreme Jews,[1] who did not expect and would not receive a divine Messiah, in which case, the interpretation of Luke's genealogy is a matter of indifference; or else, the disciples were convinced that Mary was of Davidic origin. At any rate, there must have been some way to reconcile,

[1] See Bacon: Hastings B. D., p. 141

in the minds of such strongly Jewish writers as the author of Matthew's Gospel, the two statements. This consideration lends force to our arguments to prove that, while Luke's genealogy is Joseph's, its real interest for him lay in its connection with Mary.

So far as we are concerned—for the faith of the modern Christian—Christ's spiritual sonship to David, and heirship to the promise of God is enough to meet the demands of a historic and rational faith, so that we could give up the genealogies without serious loss; but a profound conviction that the genealogies, in connection with the narrative, must have meant something definite and rational to those, by whom they were published, and to those who received them as scripture, has led me to seek some explanation of them which shall preserve their historic value.

We come next to the question of the differing historical statements of the two accounts.[1] In considering this question, due consideration should be given to the facts adduced by Godet in support of his contention that Matthew's account is a "didactic exposition," in which particular incidents are brought into connection with prophecy as a proof of the Messiahship of Jesus. This interpretation lends weight to our contention, that the incidents themselves are historical, because it would be altogether improbable that incidents should be invented for such a purpose; at the same time, if this is the proper understanding of Matthew's account of the Infancy, it is obviously unfair to attempt to fit together in an ordered sequence an argument like Matthew's, and a narrative like Luke's. Godet thus supports his contention: "So little does the author entertain the idea of relating, that in chapter i, while treating of the birth of Jesus, he does not

[1] On the general subject of the two stories see Fisher: Beginnings of Christianity, pp. 420, ff.

even mention Bethlehem; he is wholly taken up with the connection of the fact of which he is speaking with the oracle, Isa. vii, 14. It is only after having finished this subject, when he comes to speak of the visit of the Magi, that he mentions, for the first time, and as it were in passing (Jesus being born in Bethlehem), this locality. And with what object? With a historical view? Not at all; simply on account of the prophecy of Micah, which is to be illustrated in the visit of the Magi, and in which the place of the Messiah's birth was announced beforehand. Apart from this prophecy, he would still less have thought of mentioning Bethlehem in the second narrative than in the first. And it is this desultory history, made up of isolated facts, referred to solely with an apologetic aim, that is to be employed to criticise and correct a complete narrative, such as Luke's. Is it not clear that, between two accounts of such a different nature, there may easily be found blanks which hypothesis alone can fill up?"[1]

In addition to this, it is to be noted that neither account is exhaustive. Godet speaks of Luke's account as complete; it would be more strictly accurate to speak of it as relatively complete. In accordance with Luke's fixed purpose, it goes farther back to trace events from their beginning, and to place them accurately in their sequence,[2] but he nowhere pretends to be exhaustive. In fact, it is perfectly evident that events, which were mere episodes, without definite bearing upon the general movement of the history, would not harmonize with his purpose, and would be very probably omitted from his narrative.

In the very nature of the case, neither account, taken singly or both together, can be considered complete. The double narrative covers a period of nearly thirty years. It contains a statement of the ancestry, brief notices of the

[1] Godet, Com. on Luke, pp. 95, 96. [2] Luke i, 3.

time, place, and circumstances of Christ's birth, certain events which followed it, with a summary of the period between the Infancy and the Baptism which contains but one definite occurrence. It is simply inconceivable that a story which is so fragmentary and so deficient in detail, could be offered as a complete history of the Infancy.

Matthew offers a number of incidents, which are simply typical and of interest as related to the Messianic hopes. Luke gives the sequence of the chief events from Mary's point of view. Neither account is exhaustive, both together leave out many events that might naturally have found a place in the record, had the intention been cherished of making it complete.

It is to be noted, also, that neither account contains any definite chronological indications. Matthew says that the wise men came "in the days of Herod the king," and Luke connects the birth with the enrollment of Augustus; but neither one says anything concerning the intervals intervening between the birth of Christ, the coming of the wise men, the flight into Egypt, and the return to Nazareth. Matthew simply connects the return from Egypt with the death of the old king, which, of course, does not definitely fix the length of the interval.

There is, therefore, nothing in the chronological notices of either account to shut out events recorded by one and omitted by the other.

Looking now at the accounts, as they stand, it is perfectly evident that Luke gives what he conceives to be the main sequence of events. The events recorded by Matthew, which he omits, do not belong to the main movements of the history, but are in the nature of episodes.

Luke begins with the events, antecedent to the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, and from that point on gives the natural order of occurrences. The parents of Jesus

lived at Nazareth; they went to Bethlehem on business connected with a provincial enrollment; during their stay there Jesus was born; after eight days the child was circumcised according to the law; in due time, Mary presented Him in the temple and made her offering for His redemption; after their duties were accomplished, the family went back again to Nazareth to live.

Matthew gives the episode which connects the genealogy with the history—the acceptance by Joseph of the fact that Jesus should be supernaturally born. From that point on, he concerns himself entirely with a group of incidents centering around Herod. It is an episode which derives its interest entirely from the fact that it does connect the life of the new-born King with the dying Idumean, whose career formed so strange a part of the unfolding epic of Israel. Writing to Hebrews, there was no need to tell them of the familiar incidents at the temple; those might easily be taken for granted by readers familiar with Jewish practices.

But the episode connected with Herod had a vital interest to Matthew, and to every other thoughtful Hebrew, insomuch as there was a small but influential party among the Jews, who "desired the establishment of the national kingdom under one or another of the sons of Herod."[1]

The recognition of the fact that it is an episode, aside from the main course of events, effectually disposes of the assertion that it cannot be fitted into the framework of Luke's account. Luke simply passes from mention of the regular temple duties to the next event in which he was interested: namely, the return to Nazareth, where the childhood of Jesus was spent and whence He appeared as the great Teacher. What Luke says would be perfectly correct in a brief and summary account, such as his neces-

[1] See Hastings B. D., Article Herodians.

sarily was, even though the episode of which Matthew speaks, occupied two years or more. The natural sequence of events was from the temple to Nazareth, and Luke may or may not have had any knowledge of the fact that the natural sequence was broken by the occurrences of which Matthew speaks.[1]

Any interpretation of ii, 39, which forbids the insertion of the events connected with Herod, would force us to believe that the parents of Jesus left the temple and immediately, within a few moments or hours, departed for Nazareth. Since the next few verses summarize the entire period previous to the Baptism, it is not unreasonable to suppose that, in this verse, Luke simply intended to carry the narrative from one point in which he was interested to the next, without implying anything pro or con concerning the interval between the two.[2]

Notice also the close connection between verses 39 and 40. The verse which speaks of the return to Nazareth, and the verse which summarizes the greater part of the childhood are connected by δέ; this shows how rapid are the transitions in this story.

In connection with the relationship of the two accounts, Gloag holds[3] that Joseph and Mary remained at Bethlehem for a year. They had left the Khan (Matt. ii, 12), and the children, who were murdered, were from two years old and under (Matt. ii, 16)—two indications that some such period had elapsed. The first harmonist of the Gospels, Tatian, in his Diatessaron, has combined the two accounts in a very simple and effective way:—

[1] The interdependence of the two accounts in at least one detail is evident. The incident connected with Joseph's first dream explains the otherwise baffling incident of Mary's visit to Elisabeth told by Luke; see Cam. Bible for Schools, Luke, p. 54.

[2] This meets and answers the argument of Jolley, Syn. Prob. (MacMillan, 1893), pp. 24, *seq.*

[3] In. to Syn. Gospels, p. 136.

1. The birth at Bethlehem.

2. Removal from the stable to a house.

3. Forty days later, presentation in the Temple and recognition by Simeon and Anna.

4. From Jerusalem back to Bethlehem, perhaps with the idea of taking up permanent residence there.

5. About a year later the visit of the Magi and appearance of the star.

6. The warning of danger and flight into Egypt.

7. During absence, massacre of children.

8. Return to Judæa, possibly with the idea of living in Bethlehem, but warned again, turning aside to Nazareth.

Upon this, Gloag says: "By such a method, any apparent discrepancy is obviated, at least it is shown that there does not exist any antagonism between the two narratives. We have only to suppose that Luke omits in his narrative the events which occurred during the temporary residence in Bethlehem. The return to Nazareth which he mentions (Luke ii, 39) is the same which Matthew mentions as taking place on their coming back from Egypt (Matt. ii, 23)."

In accounts so fragmentary, a full exposition of sequence is, of course, impossible, but the question may fairly be asked: Is there anything in the account which forbids our acceptance of Tatian's harmony as substantially correct? The most serious obstacle is the apparent contradiction on the subject of the previous residence of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth.

Luke clearly states that the family residence was at Nazareth, to which they naturally returned after the events connected with the birth of Jesus were concluded. Matthew says nothing of any previous residence, and plainly states that they went to Nazareth through fear of Archelaus, who was reigning in Herod's place. It may be that

Matthew knew nothing of the previous residence at Nazareth, though this is by no means certain.

It must be remembered, however, that to a strict Jew it would be exceedingly offensive that the Messiah should be connected with Nazareth. To many minds, as to Nathanael's, it would be very difficult to believe that Christ should issue from an obscure and despised hamlet of Galilee. It is significant that Matthew says nothing about the connection of the family with Nazareth until he can properly adduce the divine authority for it. As Lange very clearly states it: "The often recurring assertion of modern criticism, that Matthew assumes that the parents of Jesus always lived in Bethlehem, before their settlement in Nazareth here mentioned, is supported, first, by the fact (chap. ii, 1) that the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem is spoken of without any previous mention of the journey of the parents. But since he had already spoken of Mary and Joseph in the first chapter, it might have been expected that the supposed assumption, with respect to their dwelling, would have come to light there, if it had really existed; while the fact of his not mentioning Bethlehem till he relates the birth of Jesus, seems rather to testify that he had in view another place than the ordinary abode of the parents. His reason for not naming the latter may be explained by the intention of his Gospel. He would not unnecessarily state anything which might add to the difficulties of Jewish Christians. Hence he does not name Nazareth till the passage, in which he is obliged to do so, and when he can appeal to a decided motive, and a divine direction. That Mary and Joseph had formerly dwelt at Nazareth, is, in this passage (chap. ii, 23) a merely accessory circumstance."[1]

The difference in the reasons assigned for the return to

[1] Lange L. J., vol. i, 317, 18.

Nazareth is so slight as to call for no labored explanation. It may be explained, however, by the very simple and natural hypothesis, that after the birth of Christ the family planned to live in Bethlehem, a place made doubly sacred to them by ancient and recent history. They undoubtedly had motive enough for not wishing to return to Nazareth.

We have considered with some fullness the differences between the two accounts. Unless one looks at them with a distinctively unfavorable bias, they are neither many nor serious. Aside from the genealogies, there are only such differences as would naturally occur in two documents looking at events from varying points of view, which may be readily and fairly adjusted. In any other historical documents, they would scarcely be looked upon as difficulties.[1]

In view of the striking and notable coincidences between the two documents, their divergences sink into comparative insignificance. Godet says: "Two incidents are common to Luke and Matthew: The birth at Bethlehem and His education at Nazareth."[2]

As a matter of fact, the accounts as they stand converge upon six points instead of two: The birth from a virgin; the name Jesus; the birth at Bethlehem; the Davidic descent; the dating under Herod; and the residence at Nazareth. If it be objected that the genealogies differ in the method as much as they agree in the result, it still remains true that both for Matthew and Luke, Jesus is the son of David. In documents so brief, this is most remarkable unanimity. The narratives have evidently grown up in different environments, and consider the facts from different points of view, yet they agree in the emphatic statement of the same central and all-important facts.

[1] On contradictions in historical accounts, see Fisher, Beginnings of Christianity, pp. 398, also Whately's Napoleon.

[2] Com. on Luke, p. 96.

Lobstein's objection to the conclusions naturally drawn from this unanimity lacks force because it is based upon an underestimate of the positive evidence of truthfulness in the accounts taken separately.[1]

It is practically impossible to break the force of this convergence upon the main points at issue. And the very differences add tremendously to the value of their testimony. The only plausible attempt which has been made to account for the story on mythical grounds is by alleging the influence of the prophecies as shown in Matthew's account. This explanation, as we have already seen, breaks down even in the case of Matthew, while it has no meaning in connection with Luke. The incidents must have had some other backing than quoted prophecies, or Luke would have had nothing to do with them. The supposition that prophecy first created the incidents, and that afterwards they became possessed of independent existence, and continued in circulation apart from the prophecies which gave them birth, and in connection with which all their real value consisted, is incredible.

Two accounts given for widely different purposes, and addressed to different readers, and yet testifying in common to the main facts involved, cannot be called weak nor uncertain testimony. It would carry conviction to any fair-minded jury. The only real ground of resistance to it lies in such a strong bias against the possibility of the supernatural as to render the mind proof against any amount or any kind of testimony.

We have now to consider the relationship of the incidents recorded in the Gospel of the Infancy to the rest

[1] Lobstein argues that the convergence of two documents separately untrustworthy upon the same statement does not tend to establish their truthfulness. True, but if the divergences of the documents in matters of fact have been used to discredit them, then their coincidences ought certainly to be allowed due weight in their favor.

of the New Testament. Here is to be found the real stronghold of the opposition. It is broadly affirmed that the incidents of the preliminary section totally lack confirmation from the rest of the New Testament. Mark, John, and Paul ignore the virgin birth in constructing the primitive biography of Christ, the theoretic Christology, and the Soteriology of the mature Gospel. Every one will acknowledge, of course, that any argument from silence in writings, which do not profess to be exhaustive, is to be used with caution, because it is so apt to prove too much. But it does not seem strange that comprehensive and systematic thinkers, like John and Paul, could construct their doctrines of the transcendence and authority of Christ without distinct reference to so important a fact as His supernatural birth.

Let us address ourselves to the problem.

So far as Mark is concerned, the question is comparatively simple. Mark's Gospel does undoubtedly bring us close to the early preaching of the apostles.[1] Why, then, were the disciples not satisfied with Mark's study of Christ's life? The answer ought not to be difficult. Mark's report of early apostolic preaching did not constitute an adequate or satisfying life of Christ. It began and ended abruptly, beginning with the Baptism, and ending with the Resurrection. Now the early preaching of the disciples was chiefly and properly concerned with the great fact of the Resurrection. Their message at the beginning was rigidly limited. They were chosen to be witnesses of His resurrection. But they found it impossible, even in the first delivery of their message of the Resurrection, to avoid telling something about the life of Him who rose from the

[1] Mark is the reporter of Peter who came into the group after the Baptism. Mark's Gospel is practically confined within the limits of Peter's personal experience.

dead, much less could they avoid this in the discussions which followed their preaching. The Resurrection rested upon the meaning of the death which preceded it, and the meaning of the death depended upon the significance of the life, of which it was the issue. Mark's Gospel was a compilation made from sermons of Peter, containing much biographical material, but it was not biography. It was deficient in many ways from the biographical point of view. There was a necessary and legitimate demand for a more complete life of Jesus, which should give something about His early life, and something about the incidents following the Resurrection. The Gospel of Matthew and Luke represent a natural and inevitable demand for greater details in the life of Jesus. Mark's silence on the subject of Christ's birth is no more conclusive than his silence on many other points. From his peculiar point of view, the incidents antecedent to the baptism had no particular interest. His purpose was to depict the Son of man in His career of power. He had no interest in describing the years of His obscurity and weakness. That Mark began his Gospel at the Baptism, is certainly no evidence that the life of Jesus began then. Jesus, of a truth, did not enter the world as a grown-up man. Mark's silence proves absolutely nothing about the youth of Jesus, or else it proves that He had none. If the belief that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary, was an essential element in the primitive Gospel, why did Mark not state it as such?

His silence militates as strongly against the critical view as against the historical view. If Jesus was naturally born of Joseph and Mary, and became by a divine election and baptism the Son of God, it was as wonderful and as deserving of record as the miraculous birth.

As a matter of fact, Mark's silence has no bearing upon this question, for it becomes increasingly clear that Mark

has omitted or displaced some important synoptic material which belongs before the Baptism, as well as incidents recorded in the second and third chapters of John.[1]

In other words, Mark confines himself to the public ministry of Jesus, which he considers was formally inaugurated at the Baptism.[2]

The next question concerns John's relationship to the birth of Jesus. I have already adduced reasons for believing that John cannot be counted against the orthodox position. It simply remains to bring forward those reasons a little more in detail.

The alternative theory of the origin of Jesus is boldly stated in the words of Soltau: "Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph and Mary, became the God-given Messiah, not only of His own people, but also of the whole world. This is the true miracle."[3]

This is exactly the view of Cerinthus. The great heretic could not have stated his belief any more forcibly than in these words. The overwhelming preponderance of evidence establishes that John and Cerinthus were contemporaries and opponents at Ephesus.[4] It seems to me a

[1] See able discussion of this subject in Briggs, *New Light on Life of Christ*, chap. i.

[2] Keim concedes that Mark's interpretation of Christ really involves the miraculous conception. "It is true that the last words of the short introduction, 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ *the Son of God*,' though strongly attested, must be erased on the strength of the Sinaitic manuscript (as Tischendorf has done in his eighth edition) and must be regarded as an interpolation from John; yet the watchword of the book is the Son of God—nay, going beyond the standpoint of Matthew and Luke, the only, the well-beloved Son of God, Who stands high above the angels and next to God Himself. Nor is the conception attached to the phrase merely a Messianic one, but that of the most marvelous endowment of spirit and power, a conception which seems to be based upon a supernatural birth of the Son of Mary." (Keim. J. von N., vol. i, p. 124, Eng. Trans.)

[3] Soltau, p. 65.

[4] If this fact could be successfully disproved the argument would still

little unreasonable for men, who find themselves in such perfect accord with Cerinthus, to claim John also on their side. Nothing can be clearer than that such a claim is untenable. The historic influence of John through Ignatius and Polycarp is one of the clearest lines of evidence in the history of the early church, and from the beginning it is identified with the orthodox view of the person of Christ. In every historic instance of opposition to the doctrine of the virgin birth, that opposition had its ground in views of the person and work of Christ, which John abhorred.

Moreover, the statement of Soltau is a flat contradiction of the sentence of John, which forms the keynote of his Gospel, "The Word became flesh."[1] According to this new-old view, John's sentence ought to read, "Flesh became the word"—"Jesus of Nazareth became the God-given Messiah." It is a total reversal of the entire conception which John's Gospel offers of the life of Christ. He teaches an incarnation of God, not a deification of man. The movement was first downward out of deity into man, thence upward out of man into deity.

John did not specifically mention the miraculous birth in his Gospel, for a good and sufficient reason. The miraculous birth was simply an item in a larger controversy in which he was absorbed body and mind. No one denied the miraculous birth except as an item in a larger denial. The controversy in which John was absorbed concerned the reality of the Incarnation. There was no controversy as to the virgin birth considered in itself. No one, who

stand, for the strength of the tradition is evidence enough that the teaching of John was at variance with that of Cerinthus. The Ephesine residences of John and consequently the tradition which connects him with Cerinthus is conclusively established by Stanton in Gospels as His. Doc., Pt. I., Chap. V.; see especially Con., pp. 231 ff.

[1] Cf. Fairbairn, Phil. Christ. Rel., p. 453.

accepted the Incarnation, denied or thought of denying the miraculous birth. All who accepted the Incarnation accepted, as a matter of course, the miraculous birth. When, therefore, John wrote the sentence, "The Word became flesh," he gave in his allegiance to that entire systematic interpretation of Christ with which, in the mind of the early church, the miraculous birth was inseparably bound up.

The great contention of John's Gospel, the formative idea of his entire interpretation of the life of Jesus, the basal principle of all his thinking in the realm of theology, is that the eternal Christ became embodied in the historic Jesus; and the recognized symbol to every intelligent mind of that belief was the miraculous birth. The whole question is carried by what Lange well calls the completeness of John's "Christological definitions." To count him on the opposite side of this controversy, can be done only at the expense of his honesty or his intelligence.

It is also perfectly clear that the birth at Bethlehem is implied in the text (John vii, 42) often quoted in favor of John's non-belief in the miraculous birth. (See Hastings B. D., vol. ii, p. 138, note; also see Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* Chap. v.)

It now remains for us to consider Paul's attitude toward this question. And I begin with this question: How did it happen, if Paul did not believe in the miraculous birth, and made statements directly opposed to it, that his friend and fellow-traveler and disciple, Luke, was such a strenuous believer in it? Were the two friends in opposition on this point? If Paul had firm ground for his belief that Jesus was born as other men, why did he not persuade Luke to abandon the doctrine of the miraculous birth? If Luke held the belief in opposition to Paul, why is there no hint of a controversy? The closeness of the

relationship between Paul and Luke, and the absence of any hint of a controversy between them on this or any other important question, seriously impairs the argument from Paul's apparent neglect of the doctrine. We must seek for the reason for that neglect somewhere else than in positive unbelief. Moreover, Paul's statement that Jesus was of the seed of David implies nothing more than an opinion, universal in the apostolic age, that Jesus belonged to the family of David.[1] Since the word *σπέρμα* is used in a purely figurative sense of descendants or offspring in general,[2] it conveys no definite affirmation as to the mode of Jesus' birth. It does not even forbid the supposition that Paul simply accepted Joseph's putative fatherhood as sufficient establishment of Jesus' Davidic origin. Certainly, a belief in Mary's descent from David would justify the use of the phrases *ἐκ σπέρματος* and *κατὰ σάρκα*. Prof. Stevens[3] says, "It is improbable that Paul was acquainted with the traditions respecting the supernatural conception and miraculous birth of Jesus; but even in that case, there is nothing in his language which is inconsistent with them."

Stevens's belief that Paul probably was not acquainted with the tradition of the Lord's birth seems to me unlikely, in view of the intimacy between Paul and Luke, but the conclusion which he draws from the language is unquestionable.

We have, then, two facts already upon which to base conclusions. Luke believed in the miraculous birth and there is no hint of any controversy between him and Paul on this subject. There is nothing in Paul's phraseology

[1] As Ramsay says, this belief in the Davidic origin of Jesus rests upon the same authority as the virgin birth. He could scarcely have believed in one without accepting the other.

[2] See Thayer Gk D.N.T. on *σπέρμα*.

[3] Stevens's Pauline Theology, p. 212.

inconsistent with the accepted doctrine. Does he say anything favorable to the doctrine? Opponents of the doctrine of the miraculous birth are very careful to point out that the phrase, "Born of a woman," interpreted in the light of the context, simply means to unite Christ to the race and therefore cannot imply an exceptional birth. But if the phrase ἐκ σπέρματος is to be pushed to its ultimate physiological implications of "natural generation," what is to forbid our forcing the severe interpretation of the passage, "Made of a woman," to its final conclusion that it excludes the parental agency of the father? As a matter of fact, the assertion that the Messiah was so completely a sharer in the life of the race as really to be "made of a woman," carried with it, to Paul's readers, the same implication as John's phrase, "Became flesh," of a complete doctrine of the Incarnation in which the miraculous birth was an essential item.[1] Paul cannot be forced into the camp of his extreme Judaistic opponents in the matter of Christ's birth.

That he made no further use of the fact than this incidental allusion, constitutes a problem which is worthy of a little closer attention. It would give a false impression, however, to imply that the miraculous birth is the only cardinal fact which is passed over or lightly touched upon in Paul's treatment of Christian doctrine.[2] Paul's whole

[1] Cf. acute observation of Briggs (Messiah of the Gospels, p. 50, n. 9.) that the statements of Paul imply more than the virgin birth. For evidence that account is early, see same note.

[2] For example the miracles. "The New Testament outside the Gospels contains two references and only two references to our Lord's miracles. In Acts x, 38, St. Peter is represented as alluding to our Lord's having gone about 'doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil,' but these works are not in dispute. Again, St. Luke makes the same apostle on the day of Pentecost appeal to 'mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you,' as pledges of the divine mission of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts ii, 22); and this appeal is made in the one

attitude toward the historic facts of Christ's earthly life constitutes a very important critical question. A work has recently appeared in Germany on the Pauline Christology,[1] which maintains this thesis: That practically the entire metaphysical ground work of Paul's Christology had been carried over from his Jewish thought, only the earthly life of Jesus becomes "an episode in the heavenly existence of the Son of God," which by ascribing to Him an "act of voluntary self-denial gave to His heavenly life an ethical content, which to the mind of Paul it had not previously possessed."

This thesis is, of course, greatly in excess of the facts, but it is interesting in its bearing upon the question now before us, for the book maintains that "in this kind of Christology, which Paul had in common with the Apocalyptic writers of the age, so far at least as its main outlines were concerned, there was no need and no place for a human birth of the Messiah, inasmuch as the preëxistence applied to the body as well as to the pneuma. The preexistent One was to be revealed, suddenly to appear."[2]

place in which it could naturally and rightly have been made, *i. e.*, in the presence of those who are alleged to have themselves witnessed the works—'even as ye yourselves know.' Elsewhere in the New Testament, though St. Paul is deeply conscious that the Jews, whom a crucified Messiah 'offended,' 'demand signs' (1 Cor. i, 22), and though he (Gal. iii, 5; 1 Cor. xii, 9 f., 28 ff.; 11 Cor. xii, 12; Rom. xv, 19) and the writer to the Hebrews (ii, 4) allude to signs and wonders wrought in apostolic times, there is a complete and unbroken silence as to the miracles of our Lord. A similar statement may be made as to the Apostolic Fathers." From this the writer draws the conclusion that the miracle mongering spirit was not active among the Christians at the time when the Gospels were in process of composition. It also serves to put in a very different light Paul's silence as to the birth of Christ. (Chase, Cam. Theol. Essays, pp. 403, 4.)

[1] Brückner of Karlsruhe. See Art. by Prof. Vos in Princeton Seminary Review, Jan. 1905, pp. 144 *seq.* See comment upon this work in *Cam. Theol. Essays* (1905), p. 430.

[2] Vos, Art. quoted above.

In this treatise, conclusions unfavorable, not only to the miraculous birth but also to the theological importance of the natural birth of Jesus, have been drawn from Paul's silence. And it is difficult to see why this conclusion is not as cogent as the other. If the comparative silence of Paul concerning the miraculous birth is an argument against its historical reality, is not his silence concerning the natural birth equally legitimate evidence against its reality? And it is difficult to see how one can avoid the further rather disastrous conclusion that Paul laid very little stress upon the life of Christ at all.[1]

In the attempt to interpret Paul's treatment of the facts of Christ's life, the peculiarity of his Christian experience must not be overlooked.[2] He had a vision of the risen Christ, which revolutionized his convictions and changed his life, and his entire thought of Christ and Christianity had its beginning and its center in that experience. To him all the facts of Christ's earthly life were subordinate to the supreme fact of His risen life in glory. This is the basis of all such theories as Brückner's. But this does

[1] The relationship of Paul to the facts of Christ's life has been one of the major topics in recent Pauline literature. The general trend of criticism has been to establish what ought to have been self-evident from the beginning; that Paul knew much more of the biographical details related in the Gospels than he mentions. The relationship between the historical Christ and the spiritual Christ (the Christ of history and of experience) is always one of the problems of the Christian life—but a careful consideration of our own experience will certainly establish the fact that our understanding and interpretation of the Lord whom we know in experience is constantly limited and modified by what we know of His earthly life. Indeed, our best ground of assurance that we do know Christ in experience is that the experience is in line with what we have learned to expect from Him by His life revealed in the Gospels. This is our safeguard against erratic mysticism. The difference in Paul's experience was that He knew the exalted Christ first; afterwards, and in a secondary way, the Christ of history. For discussion of literature, see Knowling, *Test. of Paul to Christ*, pp. 496 ff.

[2] See Stevens's *Pauline Theol.*, p. 206. Cf. 1 Cor. xv, 8.

not imply that he does not believe or value facts which he does not particularly emphasize in his teaching. He knows well that Jesus died before He rose again, and was born and lived and taught before He died. There is a vast amount of undeveloped biographical material in the background of Paul's thought.[1] His thought is most deeply concerned with the eternal Christ,[2] but he has by no means forgotten the historical Jesus.

Neither must we ignore the peculiar bent of Paul's mind. He was a practical theologian. He was engaged in succession upon the problems of Christian thought and life. He died in the midst of his work. He had never dealt systematically with the problem of the historic and spiritual Christ nor with Christ's sinlessness in any detail. It is perfectly true, however, as Stevens says:[3] "We can only say, then, that although there is no evidence that Paul reflected upon this problem (the supernatural birth), it is certain that he not only affirms nothing which is inconsistent with the supernatural conception, but that on no other supposition can his statements concerning

[1] See Stevens's *Pauline Theol.*, p. 208 and references. Also Mathews' *Messianic Hope in N. T.*, p. 169.

[2] This is perhaps the chief reason for Paul's comparative silence as to the biographical details of the Gospel. His message was preëminently concerned with the living Christ, as power rather than example, as present experience rather than memory. "To know this exalted Christ, to understand the present direction of His will, to be governed by Him as an active force, to be so lived in by Him as to lose self in serving as a vehicle for the life of Christ, this was worth more than any reminiscences of what He had said and done in other days. St. Paul's conviction about Jesus Christ was that He was a being of heavenly origin. He had no fantastic notions about the unreality of His human nature: His death and resurrection could not have had the meaning which they bore for St. Paul if they had been to him anything but realities of the most entirely practical kind. But St. Paul had no doubt that Jesus Christ was something higher first, and man afterwards." Mason, *Cam. Theol. Essays*, p. 427.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 212.

Christ's sinlessness, on the one hand, and universal human sinfulness on the other, be so well adjusted and harmonized."

The conclusion from the discussion is that we have no warrant for supposing that there was in any mature apostle's mind any other belief than the one which we have been taught, that Jesus was supernaturally begotten, and born of the Virgin Mary.[1] [2]

[1] Lack of emphasis upon the miraculous birth was due partly to the strong emphasis placed upon the death of Christ. This received more attention even from John than the Incarnation by itself. Cf. Denney, *Death of Christ*, p. 317.

[2] The argument in the text has been conducted upon the assumption that Paul ignores the supernatural birth of Christ altogether. It should be remarked, however, that this assumption is by no means above question. Prof. Briggs has called attention to the fact that Paul's statements really imply the virgin birth and go beyond it.

It would be difficult to show how Paul's theory of Christ as the heavenly Man could be reconciled with any interpretation of a natural generation.

Moreover, in every instance in which Paul refers to the birth of Christ, he uses an unusual word in that connection.

Instead of using γεννάω or its derivatives which is the familiar Septuagint form (γεννητὸς γυναικός) we have γενόμενος ἐκ γυναικός–"made of a woman" (Gal. iv, 4; Rom. i, 3). Dr. Knowling says, concerning the passage in Romans: "It does not seem an unfair inference that by this particular phraseology St. Paul may really be intimating the fact that he was quite aware that something was attached to the birth of our Lord which demanded an unusual mode of expression." (*Testimony of St. Paul to Christ*, Scribner's, 1905, p. 313.) On this same word Sanday and Headlam (Com. on Romans, *in loco*) say: "This word denotes, as usually, transition from one state or mode of subsistence to another (Sp. Com. on 1 Cor. i, 30); it is rightly paraphrased (who) was born, and is practically equivalent to the Johannean ἐλθόντος εἰς τὸν κόσμον." The expression involves the pre-existence, and connects this closely with the birth, making of the latter the mode of transition from one state of subsistence to another. This really involves a supernatural birth.

The phrase in Galatians (iv, 4), taken in connection with the context, has been well called St. Paul's "Gospel of the Infancy": "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under

The exegetical construction of the narratives on a fair basis of adjustment, and by substantial critical methods, results in exhibiting their harmony with each other and with the rest of the New Testament.

We are more than justified, then, in claiming that the interpretation of the accounts as substantially historical is attended with less serious difficulties than any other hypothesis.

the law that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

The reference here to the story of the Infancy as found in Luke's Gospel is so clear that one critic has raised the question whether the Infancy narrative was not an outgrowth of Paul's statement At any rate, we are justified in the assertion, that it is by no means certain that Paul makes no reference to the miraculous birth, and it is at least certain that he nowhere denies or contradicts it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST IN ITS BEARING UPON THE QUESTION OF HIS BIRTH

The person of Christ is the central problem of history, criticism, and theology. All the difficulties of critical and constructive thinking center in Him.

It is impossible to exclude the consideration of Him from any broad and rational attempt to interpret human life and the world in their relationship to the individual and to God. For the man who would understand human nature, human life, and human history, there is no escape from the necessity of attempting to interpret Him, who, in the plan of God and in the actual working of Providence, occupies a central and commanding position in relationship to all the facts which must be passed in review.

Of course, it is inevitable that the study of such a character and such a life should present manifold difficulties. From these, there is no escape in any direction.

The affirmations of faith, and the negations of unbelief, alike raise questions that cannot be answered, and lead to difficulties that cannot be solved. Mystery, inscrutable and unfathomable, is involved in any opinion or statement concerning Christ.[1] The man who would escape from mystery must cease from thinking. The controversy, which has centered about the person of Christ since the days of the apostles, is simply one of measurement of His

[1] Cf. Bruce, *Humiliation of Christ*, p. 235.

greatness. The attempt to place Him, in His relationship to God, and to man, and to history, involves the total mystery of being, carries with it sweeping affirmations in all spheres of thought, and is bound to issue in controversy. With these questions, religion has little to do. An unsolvable mystery to the intellect, Jesus is perfectly plain to the heart, and His answer to religious instinct is so complete and satisfying that the average Christian is content to live in the light of His face, and leave the baffling question to those who delight in such questions.

Nevertheless, it remains true that Jesus could not mean so much to the heart, if He were not at the same time a problem to the intellect.[1] And the constant exercise of the mind upon the questions suggested by His character and life invests His person with unfailing interest, and brings men constantly back to the vitalizing experience of fresh and intimate contact with Him. And out of this study, baffling as it is, new light and life for men continually issue. Christ baffles only to allure, and allures only to enrich. Our statements concerning Him only approach the truth, they never altogether reach it, but in that approach consists to many of us, more and more, all the light and glory and meaning of existence.

In the chapter which follows, I shall stop far short of any attempt to interpret anew the mystery of Christ. I could not do it, if I would, and for the purpose in hand, I do not need to do it. I propose basing the conclusions to which I have been led, upon the facts, which seem to me beyond the reach of controversy; and I have introduced the discussion by the considerations outlined above in order to steady my own mind, and the mind of the reader, with the thought that we are now moving in a region where the mysteries of existence center and have their

[1] See Fairbairn, *Ph. Chr. Religion, Introduction.*

home, as clouds dwell perpetually about lofty mountain summits.

It behooves one to act with caution, to put the feet firmly upon ascertained facts, and to be content to move forward slowly and carefully.

That Christ was unique among men; that He still stands alone and unapproachable in person and work, needs little more than thoughtful exposition; it can scarcely need extended argument. It is universally conceded by all competent and fair-minded students that, in the advent of Jesus Christ, the world experienced something altogether new, and that in His character and life and influence, we have something absolutely different, not only in degree, but in kind, from anything that has been seen before or since.

This is a broad basis for argument, but we have a right to insist upon it as the primary and elementary conclusion to which the study of the life of Christ leads.

In the discussion now entered upon, I shall endeavor simply to follow this premise to its ultimate and logical outcome, and nothing more. I shall not claim that He is divine in the absolute sense, nor even that He is sinless, but only that He is unique.

In what does His uniqueness consist? It consists in practically all that He was and did. His life is the revelation of a person, such as we have never known in life, and cannot find any slightest trace of in the annals of human history. The authors of the Gospels have given us the portrait of a unique person.

Jesus is unique in His historical influence. Not only was He while He was alive, and for some time after He left the world, but He is now. His influence to-day is greater than at any time since He came.

The Christian Church is usually looked upon as an

argument against Christianity, but, as a matter of fact, it is a most wonderful tribute to His personality and influence. If the church were compared only with other human institutions, it would be more highly honored, but it is brought continually into comparison with Christ, and with the ideal presented in His life and teaching, and, in this comparison, the most severe that could be imagined, suffers well-nigh total eclipse.

But it is the church which has accepted the ideal of Christ, has cherished it, and forced it upon the world. The church has held up Christ even to its own condemnation. No one is so sensitive to the shortcomings of the church as her own members. The most severe sentences of condemnation for her failure to embody the spirit of Christ are spoken by those who confess those failures as their own. And when all allowances have been made, the church still stands alone in the intensity of her devotion to the ideal, and in the greatness of her contributions to the good of man.

The church is a world-wide, fraternal organization of nearly every tribe of men, of all social grades, among whom are thousands who love Christ with absolute and absorbing devotion, who hold themselves and all that they have in trust for the good of men for His sake.

By this organization, a vast and costly machinery is maintained for the purpose of self instruction in the principles of Christ, and millions of dollars are annually expended for the purely unselfish purpose of bringing the Gospel of Christ to the needy parts of the earth.

Through all this, the influence of Christ is supreme. He stands alone in the sway, which He exercises over the minds of His followers.[1] He is unique among the founders

[1] See Orr, *Ch. View*, Am. ed., p. 41, and note, p. 389; Fairbairn, *Phil. Christ Rel.*, p. 287.

of religions in that His personality is inseparable from the ideas which He taught, and the influence which He wields. His influence is unique also, and in this, it seems to me, most of all, in that His ideas and ideals are opposed to some of the strongest elementary passions of the human heart, and yet have increasingly prevailed in the historic struggle of humanity, and in the conflict of ideas. Mohammed's power, and the secret of his influence, lay in the skillfulness of his appeal to ordinary human nature, whose weaknesses and foibles he read like a open book.[1]

Jesus enforced ethical principles, the acceptance of which depends upon a complete change of the inward being. And yet the ethics of Jesus have increasingly prevailed in the minds of men. His law of love, His principle of brotherhood, His ideal of purity, have won their way to acceptance through the overwhelming influence of His personal character and example.

The influence of Jesus may be followed through history, as a river may be followed to its source, back to its beginning in His life upon earth. And throughout its entire course, it is recognizable as the same. Wherever men have come closely into contact with Him, they exhibit the same general characteristics. Even in the dark ages of Christianity's moral eclipse, there were some who walked with Him, though in the shadow. And they were marked, as all His genuine followers have been, by a strong faith in the Unseen, by passionate devotion to the ethically ideal, and by activity in the service of mankind, especially the poor and weak. And all this leads us back to the fact of the Gospels—that contact with the person of Jesus transformed a humble group of men, in no way extraordinary, into the builders of a new era, and the perpetual moral leaders of mankind.

[1] See Mozley on Miracles (2d edition), p. 179.

Jesus was unique in His teaching.[1] I do not intend by this statement to imply that every truth spoken by Jesus was then uttered for the first time. Scholars have spent years in ransacking the literary remains of Jewish, Egyptian, Chinese, and Indian sages, to find utterances similar to those of Christ; and what have they succeeded in doing? They have simply made clear the unique comprehensiveness of the mind of Jesus, for they have shown that the scattered thoughts of the wisest men of many countries and many centuries are, in His teaching, gathered together, framed into an ordered structure, and brought into vital relationship with the great regulative principles of thought.[2] Jesus was a unique teacher in the fullness and comprehensiveness of His thought, in the condensed pregnancy of His expression, in the vividness and truthfulness of His illustrations, in the completeness of His authoritative interpretation of the great realities of the spiritual life and the unseen world, in His exposition of the significance and sacredness of common things, and, most of all, in His revelation of God and the human soul, and their mutual relationship.

It is difficult to see why the teaching of Jesus should not be final and absolute. His whole exposition of spiritual things is so complete and perfect, the entire scheme of His teaching is so comprehensive and so lofty that it is inconceivable that the mind should outgrow it; but I do not insist upon this. All that I care to urge is that His teaching is unique and unparalleled.

Jesus was unique in character. He was incomparably and indisputably the flower of humanity. It was not only

[1] Stalker, *Christology of Jesus*, chapter i. Forrest, *Christ of History and Experience*, pp. 10 and *seq.* Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 49. Fairbairn, *Phil. Chr. Rel.*, bk. II, pt. i, ch. iv.

[2] Fairbairn, *Phil. Chr. Rel.*, p. 381.

that His life was deeper and fuller and richer than that of other men, but there was in Him a generic difference of type. Love was enthroned in His life, and with that central principle His entire being moved in accord. There was no inconsistency anywhere in His life with this dominant principle.

There was in Him not only moral elevation, but an absolute moral unity, a perfect self-consistency. His whole life, in all its activities and manifestations, flowed forth from one central fountain. Mind, heart, and will moved together in smooth harmonious unity and interflow. There was in Him also a unique combination and balance of qualities. Men uniformly have the defects of their virtues. In Jesus, qualities usually[1] looked upon as inconsistent and mutually exclusive, were united in their fullest perfection. He united lofty spirituality with humaneness. He lived in the unseen world, but also close to His brethren on the earth. He had an ardent hatred for sin together with an equally ardent love for the sinner. He had intense convictions, but was without bigotry. He was meek and submissive, but without weakness. He was on occasion severe and even passionate, but never vindictive, narrow, or selfish. He had broad visions, but was practical in His methods of carrying them out,—at once a visionary and a builder.

Jesus was also unique in His self-consciousness[2] and in His relationship to God. It was not merely that He had a clearer sense of His divine Sonship than other men, although this is true. It was not merely that He lived more completely than others the filial life, although this

[1] See Bushnell's famous chapter in *Nature and the Supernatural*, chapter x.

[2] See Forrest, *Christ of History and Experience*, chap. i; also summary in Orr, *Christian View of God and the World*, pp. 24 and *seq.*

also is true. The difference in His self-consciousness goes far deeper than this. It is a general law of the spiritual life that the sense of sin increases in exact proportion with the increase of spiritual vision and moral goodness. The best men, the prophets and saints and apostles of holiness and faith, have felt most keenly and have confessed most frankly their sense of failure in the attempts so earnestly made to embody the ideal.

Jesus stood far and away above all these in His devotion to the ideal, and in the clear penetration of His spiritual insight. He was peculiarly sensitive in His moral nature, ardent in His love of goodness, equally ardent in His hatred of sin, keen in His discrimination of character, searching in His analysis of motives, emphasizing above all others the importance of the inward life, locating sin not merely in action, but in thought and feeling, and yet, all this without the consciousness of personal sin. Of this, there can be no question. There is no hint from the beginning to the end of His life as recorded in the Gospels, of anything like the confession of sin or the sense of it. I do not argue from this that He was sinless in the absolute sense, although I believe it, but only that His self-consciousness was absolutely unique. No other man who ever lived, would have dared to lift his eyes to heaven, as Jesus did, and say, "Father, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do," without being at once absurd and blasphemous.

His whole bearing toward God was that of one whose loyalty was without a flaw, and in whom perfect love had cast out fear and misgiving.

Jesus was also unique in His power to mediate the life of God to men. I am not contending that He was Himself divine, in the metaphysical sense the Son of God, but that to Him was granted, as to no other, the power to make men conscious of their sonship to God.

That Jesus is the one absolute Saviour, the only mediator between God and man may seem to some over much to affirm, but it practically comes to the same thing, for no other has had the ability confessedly belonging to Jesus, to reveal the Fatherhood in God and the sonship in man. Many, who have philosophical misgivings over sweeping statements as to the centrality of Christ in the religious life, admit that since His day no one has become united to God except through Him.[1]

We have then in the Gospels the portrait of a unique person, altogether human, and yet unlike any other human being ever seen upon the earth. He was unique in His historical influence, in His teaching, in His character, in His self-consciousness, in His power to mediate the life of God. And yet He is no monster in spite of His strangeness. He is a living person, vivid, lifelike, real and winsome. No one can possibly question that the portraiture of Christ in the Gospels is a most wonderful creation.

Now the same persons, who have given us this incomparable delineation of the unique Christ, have also given us the story of a life, the achievements and incidents of which harmonize perfectly with the character which they have portrayed. The life thus narrated is consonant in every particular with the recognized uniqueness of His character, work, and influence. They describe One, who is shown to be by His experiences and His deeds, such a one as is also indicated by the place He occupies and the influences he wields.[2]

[1] Orr, *ibid*, p. 393, note D.

[2] "General history, if it cannot verify the fact of the virgin birth, verifies the dogma as appearing in the most primitive Christian Creed, not later than the middle of the second century, as the unanimous consensus of the Christian Church in all its great historical organizations until the present time, as a dogma which has determined the history of Christian doctrine, and

They describe One, whose entrance into the world, whose course of action during His stay in the world, whose departure from the world, was as unique and unexampled as the person of whom the incidents are recorded.

The evangelists state that Jesus entered into the world by a virgin birth, that He wrought miracles of love and power, that He passed through death by resurrection, and entered into the unseen by ascension.

Of any other person, such statements would seem impossible of belief, but with what we actually know of the character and life of Jesus, they are homogeneous and congruous.

If it be urged that the miraculous elements in this story are merely accidental and adventitious, the only reasonable answer is a flat denial. The miracles are of the substance of the Gospel.[1] They form an integral and vital part of Christ's self-revelation. They are inseparably bound up with His teaching. They are as unique and inimitable as His personality. They enter into the fabric of the delineation, and are interwoven with its very substance. Now, into the structural framework of the life of

through Christian doctrine the Christian Church and Christian civilization for nineteen centuries. It is not possible to explain the history of the world without recognizing that there is a God in history, and that, to use the words of Lessing, 'the history of the world is the divine education of the race.' It is not possible to explain Christian history without the recognition of Christ in history, and if Christ, then what Christianity has always recognized Christ to be, the Incarnate Saviour, who by virgin birth identified Himself, once for all and forever, not with an individual man, but with human nature, as the Head of redeemed humanity. These things are dogmas interpreting history, which cannot be verified by historical criticism as realities attested by the human senses and human experience; but, without them, Christian history is unintelligible, inexplicable, a mass of heterogeneous facts and events without harmony and without unity." (Briggs, N. A. Review, June, 1906, Art. Crit. and Dog. Virgin Birth, pp. 869–70.)

[1] Bruce, *Mir. Element in Gospels*, pp. 118–119. Trench., *Miracles*, pp. 80–81.

Jesus, the virgin birth perfectly fits.[1] If it is an invention, it is a marvelously felicitous one.

It has been objected that the virgin birth was not necessary to constitute Jesus a unique person. This is done by His relationship to the Father in His life, by the divine election and His response to it.

It has been argued also that the Resurrection was not necessary to constitute Jesus the Saviour of man. He might have passed into the unseen world just as other men do, leaving His body behind, and yet reveal the moral power which should enable men to conquer the fear of death. Schliermacher[2] placed the virgin birth and the Resurrection exactly on a level, holding that belief in neither was necessary to faith.

It is clear, however, that the question of the Resurrection vitally involves the trustworthiness of the disciples. Paul has argued this convincingly in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians,[3] where he places the alternatives over against each other—no resurrection, no trustworthy testimony.

And to close study, it has become evident that Christ's conquest over death necessarily involves such a miracle in the material realm as should break forever the dismal tyranny of sense.

In like manner and with equal force, it has been urged that Christ might have been revealed as the Son of God with power to save without His working any physical miracle, and that in rejecting the miraculous altogether, we leave untouched the substance of His character and work.

[1] Cf. Van Oosterzee, *Person and Work of the Redeemer*, p. 149. The Miraculous Birth Natural.

[2] Der Christliche Glaube, vol. ii, 67, seq.

[3] 1 Cor. xv, 15.

To this, the answer must be returned that, as has already been said, the miraculous is an essential part of the record so vitally interwoven with the entire fabric of testimony to Christ, that it cannot be eliminated without loosening all the threads. In addition to this, it must be said that without miracle as an element of His character and mission, the original establishment of belief in Him would have been impossible.

Again, when it is argued that Jesus may be received as the Son of God without the miraculous birth, I answer: Theoretically, this is true, just as it is that Jesus might be received as the Son of God without miracle, and, as the Conqueror of Death without the Resurrection, but that He was not thus constituted is a part of the record—an element in that first testimony to Him by those who were eyewitnesses of His glory, which is our reliance. And it seems to me that it might be argued, in addition, that a miracle in the physical realm was necessary to indicate a new beginning in humanity, and to prepare for Him a human nature adequate to His self-revelation. I am not disposed, however, at this point, to urge this proposition, but I do urge that the virgin birth is an integral and congruous item in the unique life, which belongs to the story of the unique Person. It will take strong arguments to dislodge it, for it would be strange indeed if He, whose person was unique, whose character and influence were unique, whose work was unique, whose experience in death and whose entrance into the unseen were also unique, should have nothing out of the ordinary to attend His entrance into the world when, of all times in His life, it would be necessary that His importance to His own people and to the race should be unmistakably indicated. There is also some difficulty in believing that Christ's human nature, including His body, the organ of His

human life, and the instrument of His connection with the world, was not constituted in some exceptional manner.

But before taking up this question, there is another collateral line of reasoning, which leads unmistakably to the same conclusion. To this let us turn:—

The close student of the life of Christ is certain to notice, sooner or later, two series of facts running through the entire account, which he finds great difficulty in combining. No interpretation of the life can be considered satisfactory which does not find a place for all the facts. And yet they seem to be fundamental antinomies almost impossible to bring within the compass of any formula. I have tried again and again to interpret the life of Christ by the help of some definite theory of His person and consciousness, such as, for example, the Kenosis, but I have never yet been able to find any theory that would cover all the facts, nor have I read any book, in which the attempt was carried out successfully. And the least satisfactory and adequate of all is any theory of imaginative or legendary creation. It is contradicted at every step.

It is necessary here to call attention to just a few of the facts. We may begin with the Resurrection.

It might easily be urged, that the Resurrection was invented in order to establish that Jesus was the Messiah, in spite of the experience of death, but no one has been able to explain, since imagination was on the throne and invention the order of the day, why the disciples did not invent for Him some miraculous escape from death, so that they might triumphantly declare that death had never touched Him, and the smell of the grave was never upon Him.[1] Were they not bound by the facts, this invention would have been far simpler and just as effective for the immediate purpose.

[1] Mark viii, 31, 32.

Once more, take the Transfiguration. This might have been imagined by the disciples under the influence of their belief in the transcendent personal holiness of Jesus; but it is very strange that they should have invented with it, circumstances which exhibited themselves in so poor a light[1] and also have combined with it, immediately, a lesson upon His coming death—a thought from which they bitterly revolted.

Once more, take the feeding of the five thousand.[2] This is one of the nature miracles, against which rationalism is most severe. It can easily be explained as an imaginary incident, growing out of some words of Jesus on the bread of life, or simply from the thought of Him as the food of the soul. It was a beautiful dream of the Messiah dispensing food to the hungry. But it is very strange that this invented miracle should have been the hinge upon which is made to turn a great crisis in the life of Jesus,[3] one of the most clearly established facts in the entire narrative, involving a popular apostasy which left Jesus well nigh without other following than the original twelve, and seriously disturbed their peace of mind. Strange indeed it is that a spurious miracle, due to the exaggerated sense of Christ's power, should have been connected with an occurrence by which the structure of His power was shaken to the foundation.[4]

Harnack has said: "That a storm was quieted by a word, we do not believe, and we shall never again believe."[5] He must then, of course, believe that it was an imagination or invention growing out of the conviction

[1] Mark ix, 5–18; Matt. xvii, 4–16; Luke ix, 33–40.
[2] John vi, 1–14.
[3] John vi, 56, 60.
[4] Cf. Bruce, *Training of the Twelve* (4th Ed. 1891), Chap. iv.
[5] *What is Christianity?* p. 30.

that Jesus was the ruler of nature, but it is curious that in the very same account, they should specify that He was asleep in the stern of the boat, and under the power of the nature, which they assume that He controlled. Was it natural and easy for them to reconcile these two things, as reconciled somehow they must have been in their minds, by the thought that He was at once man, and the ruler of nature? Any rationalistic explanation as that the storm suddenly ceased after the word of Jesus was spoken, though not because of it, does not touch the real question at issue at all, for we are dealing simply with the completed product of the imagination. How could they hold those two apparently incongruous ideas together, that Jesus could control a storm, and that He was bodily weary and ruled by the power of sleep?

This same peculiarity is exhibited in the close conjunction in the narrative between the Baptism and the Temptation.[1] Was the Baptism, with its accessories of the voice and the vision, the creation of imagination on fire with the thought of Jesus' Messianic purpose and mission? Why then should Jesus at once be driven into the desert and there alone, unfriended (until the conflict was over), be fiercely tempted? Could the Messiah, upon whom the heavens had opened and the Spirit of God descended, be tempted to deny His Sonship and be unfaithful to His trust? What mind, exclusively filled with the sense of Christ's exaltation and unique relationship to God, could at once and immediately admit the thought that He could even hear the whispers of Satan, much less feel the force of His suggestions?

Now the documents of the Infancy are full of this same

[1] When consideration is given to the difficulty which the Temptation has always presented to Christian thought, the impossibility of its being invented in conjunction with the Baptism will be apparent.

strange contradiction which runs through the entire Gospels and marks nearly every leading incident. The incident of the visit to the temple, when Jesus was twelve years old, has been objected to on the ground that it is an incident obviously invented to show that the youth of Jesus was remarkable and prophetic. If that be so, it is remarkable that the writer should speak of Him as "asking questions," and should couple with the incident the statement that He went home and was subject to His parents. This is an unexplainable anomaly in an imaginative account to picture the remarkable boyhood of the Messiah.

It has been alleged that Matthew surrounds the cradle of Christ with royal splendors, while Luke pictures it with every circumstance of humility; but Luke tells the story of the choiring angels, and Matthew records the ignominious flight into Egypt.

This same contradiction enters into the story of the birth. It is argued that the miraculous conception is a myth to account for the divinity of Christ's person and work. If this is so, how came it about that this invention is coupled with a normal birth and a natural childhood marked by growth in body, mind, and spirit?

In all the range of Christian thinking, there is nothing more difficult to reconcile with Jesus' divinity than His birth as a child and His growth in stature, knowledge, and grace. Bold indeed must the speculator have been, who first, as a mere work of the imagination, coupled these two things together.

The considerations outlined above, point unmistakably to certain well-defined conclusions. What are they? We have seen that throughout the Gospels (and the process might have been worked out a great deal more in detail) facts are brought together logically impossible to correlate. Facts which indicate Christ's transcendence are implicated

with facts which represent Him as a man under limitation. Between these two sets of facts, the ablest constructive minds of the church in all ages have vibrated.[1]

[1] The difficulty of adjusting these facts is a permanent one in Christology. Here is a recent statement of precisely this problem:—

"We seem, however, to be in danger of being placed in a dilemma. On the one side, we are directed solely to the historic Jesus and challenged to face the limitations of an age little versed in the field of scientific criticism. On the other, we may be tempted so to fix our gaze on the transcendental Christ of St. Paul and the Fourth Gospel as to neglect the gracious Figure of the Synoptists, the alternative may even be to choose between a Christ altogether human, and one altogether divine. It is a phase of the old question between the Ebionites with their Christ as a Jewish prophet, and the Marcionites, with their transcendental revealer of the Supreme God of love; between Paul of Samosata, with his deified man, and Sabellius with his economic manifestation of God; between the School of Antioch, with its excessive insistence upon the humanity of Christ, and that of Alexandria with its devotion to Him as the divine Logos rather than as man; between Professor Harnack, with Christ as the moral teacher of Galilee, and the Abbe Loisy with the Jesus of the Gospels lost in the Christ-spirit working in the Catholic Church.

"But neither alternative can be accepted to the exclusion of the other. The instinct which leads men in all religious revivals back to the historic Christ of the Synoptists is indeed a sound one; for, in a certain sense, the figure of our Lord taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and the glorified Christ of a later age, are equally divine. If we fail to recognize this, the reason lies in our own inability to recognize that the essence of the kingdom of God consists not only of a glorified Monarch in heavenly state, but also of a King, tending, guarding, helping, toiling in and with His subjects," etc. *Cam. Theol. Essays*, p. 522.

The truth of the matter is, that none, since the writers of the Gospels, have been able to hold in perfect balance the two lines of facts about Jesus—His humanity and His transcendence. But they have. The contrast sometimes so sharply drawn between the Christ of Paul and John, and the Jesus of the Synoptists is not justified by the facts. Mark's Gospel which is supposed to be the most primitive, portrays Christ as the wonder-working Son of God with greater emphasis upon His transcendent power than even John's. The point of view is different, but the portrait is perfectly consistent. Mark tells what Jesus did; John tells how He was able to do what He did. Mark tells the story; John grounds the story in the essential being of Jesus. But so far as the transcendence, or the humility, the divinity, and the human-

Certain thinkers have seen, with great clearness, those facts, which exhibit Christ's transcendence, and are convinced believers in His deity, but have great difficulty in holding firmly to His real humanity.

Others have seen with equal clearness the facts which bind Christ to His brethren, and hold with ardor to the human Christ, but deny or neglect His deity.

The evangelists were true to all the facts, and held them firmly, never passing over indications of Christ's transcendence or His humanity. Neither have they wavered from one side to the other, portraying now a human, now a superhuman figure; but they have portrayed one undivided living Lord, at once human and divine.

And to me, the conclusion is inevitable that they had seen and known Him, and that qualities and attributes seemingly contradictory when considered in the abstract, blended and were harmonized in His unique personality.[1]

More than this, we have seen that the Infancy documents have this peculiar and striking feature in common with the rest of the Gospels. They bring together into one account, facts that reason cannot harmonize, except by reference to Him in whom God and man were united. It is an integral part of one unique representation.

If the narrative was invented, in distinction from being discovered or recorded, it was invented by one who was full of the spirit of the Gospel, who carried engraven upon mind and heart the authentic portrait of the unique Person, in whom the antinomies of the divine and the human were blended and harmonized.

ity of Jesus are concerned, there is little to choose between Mark and John. It is probably true that no primitive disciple of Christ, after His life story was complete, was blind either to the transcendence or humility of His person.

[1] Cf. Fairbairn, *Phil. Christ. Rel.*, p. 330; also p. 327 and all of Chap. ii. Pt. I, Bk. II.

That which this unknown writer has imagined or invented is one in some of its most striking characteristics with that which, on the whole, is acknowledged to be accurate and authentic. We are thus led to one who belonged to the inmost circle of apostolic thought, and possessed at the same time of a high order of creative imagination.

As a matter of fact, the hypothesis that this part of the narrative was a mythical creation is utterly untenable in view of what the record actually contains. Moreover, it would seem that the unrestrained speculation of the disciples might easily have moved in an entirely different direction, without putting so great a strain upon their imaginative faculty. If it be true, as we are assured, that the early part of Jesus' life was so obscure that no authentic records were in existence concerning His childhood and youth, why did not the disciples and the evangelists make the most of that mystery, and represent Jesus as a portent suddenly appearing no one knew whence? That there were expectations current among the Jews into which such an interpretation of Jesus' early life would exactly fit, we have the clearest evidence. The Jews objected to Him on the ground that they knew too much about Him. "[1] Howbeit we know this man whence He is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is." That is, that the Messiah would be utterly mysterious in His advent, appearing suddenly without ordinary human relationships. This interpretation of Christ would not be open to some objections urged against the Infancy section. The earliest critics of that portion of the Gospel objected to it on the ground that it reduced Christ to the dimensions of a man by making Him to be born of a woman, and subject to limitation and growth.

[1] John vii, 27.

And if it be urged that this line of imaginings would be impossible because the relatives of Jesus were well known and the facts of His family and home familiar, what becomes of the hypothesis that the earlier period of His life was so obscure that facts were not attainable, and the imagination of disciples was driven to creation by dearth of information on a subject in which they were deeply interested.[1]

By two relatively independent lines of reasoning, we have been brought to see that the narrative of the Infancy is an integral and congruous part of the portrayal of Christ's life in the Gospel.

We must now approach a little closer to the great mystery itself, in the hope that to reverent and thoughtful inquiry it may disclose some of its deeper meanings.

The Scripture is consistent in representing that the Spirit of God stood in unique relationship to Christ throughout His entire career– at His conception;[2] at His birth;[3] during His growth;[4] in His youth;[5] at His Baptism;[6] and throughout His ministry.[7]

The objection which Keim urges, that the Infancy section wrongly attributes to Jesus in His early life the inspiration which was bestowed only at the Baptism, must be excluded.[8]

Whatever critical importance may be attributed to the experience at the Baptism in connection with Jesus' consciousness of His Messiahship, it must have been preceded by a dawning sense of His Sonship, and this could have been gained only through the same in-

[1] See Author's Notes—Note D for discussion of this point.
[2] Luke i, 35. [3] Luke ii, 9.
[4] Luke ii, 40. [5] Luke ii, 52.
[6] Mark i, 9–17; Luke iii, 21, 22; Matthew iii, 13–17; John i, 32–34.
[7] Mark ix, 2–8; Matthew xvii, 1–8; Luke ix, 28, ff., etc.
[8] See above p. 56 and note at end of Chap. iv.

spiration. Christ's understanding and acceptance of His mission to His nation and to the world must have been based upon a previously developed consciousness that He was in a special sense the Son of God, unless we are to believe that Jesus received at His baptism at once and by instantaneous inspiration, the knowledge that He was the Son of God, and also the Saviour of men, which is altogether unlikely. God does not work in that way. If Jesus had already come to the consciousness of His Sonship, it could have been only through the inspiration of the Spirit granted to Him in the process of His growth in grace and knowledge. The representation of Luke that in His youth He had such a special sense of relationship to God as to be able to speak of "the things of My Father," is perfectly correct, and lends force and value to his further representation that the Spirit was especially involved in the processes which were necessary in order to bring Christ into the world as a little child. This puts the inspiration of God in the life of Jesus back of the dawn of consciousness. It may be looked upon as a mere *obiter dictum*, or even as the confession of mental impotence, but I confess that I see no better way to explain the origin and early life of Jesus than that given in the Gospel of the Infancy. And the alternative theory that Jesus was conceived in the ordinary way and received the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as other men, except in degree, seems to me utterly inadequate to explain the facts.

For one thing, we are compelled to furnish some explanation of the difference between Jesus, and John the Baptist.

Arguing from analogy, it would seem necessary to postulate some essential difference in heredity and pre-natal influence to account for the uniqueness of Jesus.

Never does His uniqueness become more clearly manifest than when He is brought into comparison with the character and work of John.

According to the theory which we have been criticising in these pages, Jesus and John were born under practically the same conditions. They were kinsmen; the families belonged to the same circle of religious beliefs; the children must have received much the same training.

John was a remarkable man—of this there can be no question. We have the best of authority for according to him a high place among the great men of the world.[1] He was the culminating representative of a line of prophets and thinkers who interpreted the hope and embodied the spirit of Israel at its best. He gave to that inherited hope a new interpretation—with most remarkable self-abnegation, he sank his own personality behind the commanding figure of Jesus, and in accordance with his mission prepared the way for faith in Him by turning his own disciples into the path of Christian belief.

Nevertheless, paying all possible honor to John, it is yet saying little enough to affirm that Jesus was different from him, and superior to him Jesus moved in a totally different realm.[2] His conception of God, His interpretation of the kingdom of heaven, His mode of life, the method of His approach to people, the whole spirit and atmosphere of His thinking differed *toto cælo* from John's. The most that can be said of John is that although much was new in his interpretation of the prophetic message, he, none the less belonged to the old era and never passed into the new. He gave his disciples to Jesus, but he himself never became a disciple.

The least that can be said for Jesus is that although

[1] Matthew, xi, 11.

[2] See Reynolds, *John the Baptist, passim.*

there was much of the spirit of the prophets in His message, He was the inaugurator of the new era, and altogether of it Himself.

Now the most striking fact in this comparison and contrast lies just here, that John, with a touch of originality due to his personal quality and a special divine endowment, was the natural product of his heredity, his environment, and his training, while Jesus was not.

The careful and studied attempts which have been made to connect Jesus with the mental life of His age, while it has shown Him to be indebted to it for certain of the raw materials of His thought, has only served to bring into clearer relief the daring originality of His interpretation and application of historic beliefs.

We come then to the question: How did Jesus come to be so different from John? John himself recognized the difference between himself and his kinsman, and attributed it to a close relationship of the Spirit of God to the life of Jesus to which he, Spirit-filled man though he was, could lay no claim. Though both were children of promise, yet Jesus was Himself so much closer to the Spirit, that His ministry was to John's as fire to water.[1] How was this peculiar relationship of the Spirit to Him constituted, and when did it begin? That this peculiar relationship to the Spirit of God was something that was attained only at maturity in an instant of time at the Baptism, I find it impossible to believe. That it could have come to be otherwise than by the special implication of the Spirit in all the processes by which Jesus came to be, I find it equally impossible to believe.

I am not urging that the virgin birth alone and of itself, can explain the uniqueness of Jesus, but that it is one of the elements which must enter into the explanation, I

[1] Luke iii, 15-17.

cannot doubt. There is nothing in the two households to explain why Jesus should differ from John except as one individual of the same general class differs from another. That the special relationship of the Spirit to two individuals differing from one another only in a minor degree, is enough to account for differences so world-wide is at least opposed to what we know of God's method in dealing with men. That there is much in the circumstances of Jesus' birth, as related in Matthew and Luke, to account for the phenomena of Jesus' character, seems unmistakable.

Jesus was a new creation in the midst of humanity. This is all but universally admitted. But a new creation in humanity implies a great deal. It implies this first, that the physical organization of Jesus must have been exceptional and extraordinary. There is a physical basis of character. Exceptional men, especially those who have deeply influenced their fellows, have had not only unusual brain capacity, but a finely organized physical constitution. The heights of power are reserved to those in whom body and spirit are so exquisitely attuned as to make the one the perfect instrument of the other.

That Jesus was exceptional in His physical characteristics, is evident from many incidental touches, though the disciples were very careful to leave on record no description of His appearance. But His looks, His gestures, His attitudes in the presence of others, made a deep impression upon them, and evidently formed a part of His equipment of power. That there was in His personal appearance a unique combination of majesty and winsomeness, of the divine and the human as inimitable and unexplainable as in His character and life otherwise depicted, the account places beyond doubt.

In addition to this, the spiritual nature of Christ must have been, equally with His body, exceptional. Putting

aside the deeper mysteries of His nature, it is evident that the super-material being of the human Christ, who was the perfect organ of the eternal Spirit, must have been in some sense a special creation of God.

The uniqueness of Jesus consisted essentially on the inward side in the perfect clearness of His God-consciousness. It does not seem too much to say that the very ground work of the consciousness of Jesus was the Spirit of God.

"It is not the old Israelitish religious consciousness, which lives in Jesus in such all determining fashion, but a new, till then in the world unheard of, and perfect consciousness, which not only is still unsurpassed, but in its inwardness and clearness, never can be surpassed."[1]

Outwardly, this uniqueness consisted, so far as its purely spiritual quality is concerned, in the perfect surrender of Himself to the will of God, and to the service of men.

In the history of a person thus constituted and born into the world, pre-natal influence must have an important modifying influence.

Human experience has established very firmly the conviction that the maternal influence is dominant in the transmission of human life. Great men, almost without exception, have great mothers. Even children of great men are apt to fall to the level of mediocrity unless there is something above the ordinary in their mothers.

Along with this, we have learned to attribute much to pre-natal influence. Those months, in which the life of the child is a part of the life of the mother, are in an especially important sense, creative. The mental and emotional life of the child gains its direction and disposition not only from the past of the race through heredity, but immediately through the influence of the mother's predominant moods and emotions.

[1] Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu*, p. 175.

Was there anything in Mary to account for the uniqueness of her Son? Looking at Mary herself, apart from the recorded circumstance of Jesus' birth, I fail to see any such preëminent greatness in her as would aid us in accounting for Jesus. One would hesitate to do injustice to the hereditary and natural reverence for the mother of Jesus, but in the notices we have of her life, what qualities does she exhibit that distinguish her, for example, from Elisabeth? She failed totally to understand her Son or to accommodate herself to His interpretation of His own career. Religiously she belonged to the school of John rather than that of Jesus. She was certainly inclined to interfere in the free development of His mission. She was undoubtedly a blameless Jewish maiden of deeply religious spirit, and if we have to add to this, that she was narrow according to the limitations of her nation and of her age, who shall be the first to condemn her?

This seems to me a fair judgment of Mary apart from the story of Jesus' birth, as told in the Gospel. Accept this, however, and her whole career gains an altogether new meaning and value. In one moral quality, it is likely that Mary excelled her sisters, but it is due to the story of the birth of Jesus entirely that we know it.[1] The distinctive historic glory of womanhood is in woman's power of self-abnegation. In this, man has never been a competitor on equal terms. Woman's contribution to social advancement is perfectly evident. The industrial arts, the occupations of peace, the spirit of unselfishness, the unity and stability of home, the principle of self-control,—these have been in large measure the gift of woman to the race. The greatest triumph of evolution was the mother, and through her the greatest social blessings have come.

The stress laid in Scripture upon the Hebrew mothers

[1] See statement of Dr. Briggs, quoted p. 96.

in connection with the promise, from the words spoken to the woman in the garden, to the words of the angel of the Annunciation, may be taken as an intuitive interpretation of woman's vital connection with the spiritual evolution of the race.[1]

If the Gospel story of Jesus' birth is true, Mary stands discovered as the "ideal mother" delineated in Scripture,[2] for no other ever made so utter a sacrifice for the race as she. In all the range of imaginable possibilities, can we conceive of any service demanding such utter extinction of self as that to which Mary was called, when the task was laid upon her of bearing, as a virgin, the Saviour of men? She was a pure maiden. She had all the Hebrew passion for purity and a pure maiden's jealousy for her good name, transmitted to her through generations of women, who had yearned for blameless motherhood, as bearing within it the possible fruition of the promise made to Abraham.

Yet, when this announcement was made to her, she knew, she must have known, she could not have helped knowing, that distrust and evil fame, open sneer, and biting innuendo, would be her portion. We are made witnesses to the recoil of her spirit in the timid question, "How shall this be?" And then to her submission to the divine will, though dark and mysterious the behest. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." We are thus brought into the presence of a self-abnegation immeasurable by any human mind. She too, as well as her Son, had to endure the cross, despising the shame, and, if it was for the joy that was set before her, she could rise to the appreciation of it only through the utter submission of her will to God.

[1] See Dawson, *Modern Science in Bible Lands*, p. 207.

[2] Cf. Beecher, *Prophets and Promise*, p. 333.

It seems to me that we have here a true interpretation of the antecedent and formative influences that conditioned the entrance into life of the unique Man.

Viewed apart from the virgin birth, the life of Mary seems to me a sordid and meaningless tragedy. That which really constituted Him the Son of God and the Saviour of men took place outside her influence entirely and apparently in spite of it, and all that she furnished to Him, as equipment for His Messiahship, were hampering limitations of thought and feeling, which He was obliged to throw off in order to enter upon His true career. She was not really the mother of the Christ.

But, on the other hand, viewed in connection with the virgin birth, Mary is lifted into a sovereign place in the life of Christ. He was formed as Christ and Lord, though in humiliation within the circle of her life and the impress of her consecration was upon Him.

The religious importance and value of her unique experience ought not to be forgotten in an estimate of the formative influences in the life of Jesus. Without yielding for a moment to any ascetic beliefs concerning marriage, we may safely believe that there was something peculiarly favorable to holiness of thought and life in the months of sacred seclusion during which the child was borne beneath her heart. Certain it is, that if this story be true, we have an aid to the understanding of the unique spiritual quality of the life of Jesus. Mary gave to Him that which was the ruling impulse and constitutive principle of His entire life, in that she conceived Him in utter selflessness and surrender to the will of God. God was to her, in literal fact, the all in all of her sacred motherhood, and from Him directly she received her Holy Child.

CHAPTER IX

THE DOCTRINAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE HISTORIC FACT

The total outcome of our study thus far has been to establish on a firm basis the general historical trustworthiness of the Infancy narratives, which carries with it the credibility of the most important assertion made therein concerning the miraculous birth of Jesus.

We have tried to follow, carefully and candidly, the theories which have been constructed, to account for the narrative on the mythical basis and have, in every instance, become involved in difficulties greater than those from which we have escaped.

We are, therefore, compelled by logical necessity to except the traditional interpretation of these documents as the one among many rival interpretations most in harmony with the facts.

It now remains to attempt the doctrinal construction of the historic fact. What does the miraculous birth mean for Christian faith, and what place is to be granted to the affirmation concerning Christ's birth among our religious convictions? As contributary to clearness on this subject, let us first of all consider certain *a priori* objections to the doctrine of the virgin birth.

The first is made on scientific grounds. It is objected that the virgin birth involves a breach in natural ordinances, which we have been taught to consider sacred and divine.[1] To this, I answer that a breach in those ordi-

[1] Keim, vol. i, p. 53.

nances has already been made in the bringing into the world of the unique Man. Jesus Himself undeniably constitutes an exception. He was beyond question a moral miracle.[1] If He was sinless, certainly the continuity of racial development was violently broken. If one seeks escape from this conclusion, which is logically inevitable from the premises, by denying sinlessness in any complete sense to Jesus, not only is the denial itself feeble and half-hearted, but even if allowed to stand, the relief which it affords is only partial; for His uniqueness in self-consciousness, in character, in life, and in ability to mediate the life of God, still constitutes such an exception to ordinary human character, as to leave the continuity of racial unfolding in a seriously damaged condition.

Besides, we are entirely justified, on the basis of ascertained fact, to claim exception for the bodily life of Jesus. A moral miracle involves a physical miracle. All mental processes involve molecular changes. The reformation of a drunkard involves a readjustment of his entire physical constitution. The birth into the world of a being like Jesus, of such transcendent moral and spiritual qualities as to set Him apart from the race to which He belongs, involves a special divine activity in the formation of the humanity, which He wears. The intimate blending of body and soul, the necessary and constant interaction of the two in one indivisible, personal life justifies no other conclusion.

Moreover, if the record of Jesus' life is not an absolute tissue of fables, His acts of power constitute an invasion of these sacred ordinances, if such they are, very difficult indeed to repair. There is need here for careful discrimination or we shall be going astray in the fog. Is it seriously urged that there is any argument on scientific grounds

[1] See Bruce, *M. in Gospels*, pp. 352.

against the miraculous birth which is not of equal force against any miracle? Is there any greater scientific objection to the statement that Jesus entered the world in an exceptional manner, than to the statement that He left the world in an exceptional manner? As a matter of fact, there is none except in just this one particular, that the fact of the miraculous birth is capable of less extended verification than other miracles. I cannot help the feeling that opponents of the supernatural have looked upon the virgin birth as offering opportunity for an easy victory, since in the very nature of the case the number of witnesses is small. The attack upon the reality of the Resurrection has failed because of the fullness of the testimony.[1] There are also, as we have seen, insuperable difficulties involved in the mythical interpretation of the Infancy narrative.

The rise, publication, and acceptance of the story of the miraculous birth is an unsolvable enigma, except upon the supposition of a basis in actual fact. Against this testimony, no cogent argument can be lodged on scientific grounds. The real basis of objection is a naturalistic bias, which applies equally to all manifestations of the supernatural.[2] [3]

This bias is philosophic, not scientific. Much of the

[1] On the subject of the Resurrection, cf.: Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief* (Eng. trans.), pp. 448–467.

[2] "From the scientific point of view the evidence required to establish any 'very wonderful event' is essentially the same as that required for any other historical event, only it must be scrutinized with special care, proportionate to its antecedent improbability judged from that point of view.

"From the theological point of view our judgment on the 'miraculous' character of the event, where the fact of its occurrence is established, will depend on the light which it throws on the character and purpose of God." (*Murray Cam. Essays*, p. 323.) No one can object to these principles, but the hard and fast *a priori* determination that miracles are impossible is a very different thing.

[3] See note A, Appendix.

current objection to miracles on alleged scientific grounds is radically unscientific, because it is maintained by a refusal under the influence of a philosophic notion of the world to admit evidence, and it logically involves blank atheism.

To the thorough-going theist, the possibility of miracles is not an open question. The possibility of miracles is involved in the theistic postulate. If there is a personal supramundane God, then it is, of course, possible that such a being at any time for reasons sufficient to His wisdom, may act directly upon the world and its ordinances. Whether he has done so in any given instance is purely a matter of evidence. And the man who is wise will not allow any hard and fast *a priori* theory of the world to blind him to the force of positive evidence under the mistaken notion that such an attitude is scientific.

There is no slavery comparable with mental bondage to a false philosophic principle. It is positively pitiful to see the struggle of men,[1] who are bound by the naturalistic postulate that miracle is impossible, to interpret the character and life of Christ. I cannot resist the conclusion that Keim's theory of a special divine agency in the natural birth of Jesus like his "heavenly-telegram" theory of the Resurrection is of the nature of an impotent compromise between his philosophic theory and the self-evident truthfulness of the narrative.[2]

As a matter of fact, physical science as such has nothing to say for or against the miraculous birth of Jesus.[3] If it has anything to say at all, it is that an exceptional organ-

[1] See Bruce, *H. of Christ*, p. 216; *Ibid*, Miraculous Element in Gospels, p. 98; see Keim, vol. ii, p. 127.

[2] Cf. Bruce, *Apologetics*, pp. 392-3.

[3] Nor indeed against miracles as such. Cf. discussion by Fairbairn, *Ph. Ch. Religion*, pp. 23, ff.

ism implies an exceptional life history. The uniformity of nature has no bearing upon the question, for the uniformity of nature rightly interpreted means simply that the same causes always produce the same results. It has nothing to say about the hypothesis of a new cause in any given instance, except to investigate it.[1]

Nature herself is plastic, and introduces new methods of operation. I once heard an interesting utterance of the late John Fiske in reply to the old question: "Which is first, the egg or the hen?" Fiske replied: "Neither—at

[1] The scientific aspects of the virgin birth of Christ have received considerable attention at the hands of thoughtful men. Two views are especially worthy of note. Dean Fremantle in an address before the Churchmen's Union in October, 1901, made the following interesting remark upon the scientific question involved: "In Darwin's book on the changes of Plants and Animals under Domestication, he points out that *Parthenogenesis* is found much higher than is generally known in the organized creation, and he asks why the operation of the male is required, the germ or ovum of the female being complete in itself. He answers that he can give no reason except, probably, that force and energy are thus added. If, then, the accounts in the Gospels—that is Matt. i and Luke i—are true literally, the meaning of my suggestion would be that the yearnings of a young Hebrew woman, longing with intense and holy desire to be the mother of the Messiah (which longings were the direct action of the Holy Spirit) excited and quickened the germ within her, and produced in this case what is usually produced by the action of the male. This seems to me the only meaning that can be got out of the words of St. Luke, unless you are to 'invoke the word miracle.'" (See article in Con. R., vol. 84, p. 236.)

This is merely an attempt to give an explanation in terms of biology of the simple statement of the Gospel that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. That the Gospel narrative itself attempts no such explanations but rests upon the fact itself is one of the elements both of its grandeur and power. Peyton in his book, *The Three Greatest Forces in the World*, Part I, The Incarnation (London, A. & C. Black, 1905, pp. 130, f,) makes an elaborate exposition of the subject, arguing that the virgin birth is not a miracle in the ordinary sense, but simply "the exceptional operation of a natural law." "She (nature) takes pleasure in variation. The virgin birth of Christ is exceptional, and we shall presently see how this large exception finds admission among other large exceptions in the scheme of nature, creating epochs (p. 132)."

the beginning of the series is a cell which has the power to fold in upon itself and divide into two parts, each of which becomes a complete individual." In a universe, whose ordinances are so pliable as to make room for reproduction by various processes from simple cell division to mammiferous birth, there is room for an exception, such as the birth of Jesus, in the interest of a higher life for man.[1] If to the man of scientific temper, the miraculous birth as a means of accomplishing the Incarnation and beginning a new era in human history seems incredible, let him read the following extract which exhibits the series of ascents by which the strictest science interprets the movement of nature from lower to higher forms and by which is laid the foundation of a "religion of humanity."[2]

"The 'religion of humanity' runs back the genealogy of man, with all his powers, with all his equipments, to the dust of the earth. I hold in my hand a genealogy which I wish you to compare with the genealogy of Luke. It is not a satire; it is not an irony. I have taken it from the pages of Ernest Haeckel. It is true, I have condensed it from perhaps a dozen pages, but in that condensation I have followed precisely the line traced by the atheistic philosopher. What is omitted is simply the detailed description of the several species in the genealogy. Let me read it: 'Monera begat Amoebae, Amoebae begat Synamoebae, Synamoebae begat Ciliated Larva, Ciliated Larva begat Primeval Stomach Animals, Primeval Stomach Animals begat Gliding Worms, Gliding Worms begat Soft Worms, Soft Worms begat Sack Worms, Sack Worms begat

[1] Cf. letter from Prof. Huxley quoted by Gore, *Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 266 and reference, p. 58.

[2] Extract from an article by Dr. L. Abbott, quoted by van Dyke, *Gospel for an Age of Doubt*, p. 410.

Skull-less Animals, Skull-less Animals begat Single-nostriled Animals, Single-nostriled Animals begat Primeval Fish, Primeval Fish begat Mud Fish, Mud Fish begat Gilled Amphibians, Gilled Amphibians begat Tailed Amphibians, Tailed Amphibians begat Primeval Amniota, Primeval Amniota begat Primary Mammals, Primary Mammals begat Pouched Animals, Pouched Animals begat Semi-apes, Semi-apes begat Tailed Apes, Tailed Apes begat Man-like Apes, Man-like Apes begat Ape-like Men, Ape-like Men begat Men.' "

Another objection urged against the doctrine is that it separates Christ from us by postulating a difference in the mode of His conception and birth. I answer: Not unless it is granted that the mode of His conception must necessarily exercise a controlling influence in the formation of His personality. The contention of those who oppose the virgin birth, is that it is not necessary in order to explain His exceptional character. That He is exceptional, is granted; the relationship of His birth to the distinctive quality of His personality is in dispute. It is affirmed that the power of God acting upon the personality of the naturally begotten Jesus would sufficiently account for Him. If this contention is correct, then the mode of His birth, since it has no determining influence upon His personality, is a negligible factor in the interpretation of that personality, and the mode of His birth could not have enough influence to separate Him from us. Those who object to the virgin birth on the ground that it is not necessary to account for His divinity, ought not to object to it on the ground that it destroys His humanity. There appears to be, in the background of this argument, a notion that in order to a complete humanity of Jesus, we must hold that He was naturally derived from the race like the rest of us, and that by divine election, and His own moral choice,

He became the Messiah. It is strange that men, who really hold this view do not see that they have surrendered the vital principle of the Incarnation. It is a fundamentally unscriptural Christology into which timid thought has inadvertently fallen. And it offers no genuine relief to the mind because it postulates not only an exceptional personality, but also an exceptional experience.

As Soltau says, the miracle is still there. By boldness in our affirmations, however, we shall save both His divinity and His humanity. We boldly affirm that Jesus was exceptional throughout, in the constitution of His being, in the mode of His entrance into the world, in the quality and compass of the powers within Him, in His moral consciousness, in His character, in His mode of life, in His departure from the world—and yet with equal tenacity, we hold that by voluntary choice He lived a genuinely human life, in dependence upon the Father, in struggle with temptation, in weakness, sorrow, and death.

The meaning and glory of the Incarnation lie in this, that while Jesus was exceptional, separated from us by the breadth of worlds in His spiritual character and moral life, He was yet, by the power of His mighty sympathy, brought close to us, even drawn down into our life, so that we touch Him as a brother and friend. In view of all that Jesus was represented to be, the objection to His miraculous birth, which is but one item in the total representation of Him, on the ground that it constitutes Him an exception and removes Him from us, cannot be allowed to stand.

The last objection, which I shall consider, is that the virgin birth degrades our human life by assuming that the Messiah could not have been brought into the world except by a suspension of the natural processes by which life is continued upon the earth.

I do not pretend to know what God could or could not do—I have not presumed to say that God could not have brought the Messiah into the world by other methods than the one which we think He chose. The reader, who has followed the argument thus far, has noticed that every *a priori* consideration, which has been urged in favor of the received doctrine, has been introduced by the saving process, "It seems, or it looks as if." There is no place in such a discussion for dogmatic assertions as to what God may or may not do. But that the doctrine of the virgin birth has any tendency to degrade our human life, or to cast discredit upon its sacred mysteries, I emphatically deny.

It is true that in the second century and onward, the virgin birth was used to put a premium upon virginity, and to lend support to the ascetic tendency in general. It must be remembered, however, that the Gospel[1] was not formed in that atmosphere, and that it did not create the ascetic tendency, which was a natural reaction from the corruptions of heathenism, while it offered the most effective resistance to the Gnostic ideas of the corruption of matter, and the most effective support to the doctrine of a real incarnation. Among the historic influences of the Infancy narrative, must be counted also an intensified conception of the beauty of child-life, and the sacredness of motherhood.

What then, does the doctrine of the miraculous birth really imply as to the sacredness of human life and parenthood? In the evoking of a new life upon the earth, it is unquestionably true that human beings are permitted to exercise a deputed divine function. God is Himself, in the last analysis, the Creator of all living things. And yet, it is a mediated connection, which He has with the origination

[1] Matthew i, 25.

of human life since the first creation. This function, the highest and holiest which a created being is capable of exercising, shares the imperfection and tendency to deterioration which belongs to all things human. In fact, the all pervading virus of sin has infected this holy mystery of our being more deeply, and corrupted it more shamefully, than any other.

A train of unimaginable ills has followed upon its abuse. Sometimes the divine element is reduced almost to nothing. It would be an insult to God to call Him the creator, in any direct sense of multitudes of mis-begotten and sin-cursed unfortunates, who are the embodiment not of the divine creative power, but of human folly and crime. Still, there is something of the work of God in the lowest. Imperfect as human relationships are at their best, God uses them as the instruments of His own power. There is in every normally constituted human being an individuality, an originality, which is the stamp of the divine creative activity, the image of God.

The unfolding revelation of the Bible exhibits God's purpose to sanctify and redeem the human family by making it the means by which the great promise should be fulfilled. The culmination of that process comes in the birth of the Son of man of a human mother, but by the immediate exercise of the divine creative power, God's own sublime function reassumed in order to symbolize a new beginning in human life, a new era in human history. Every lower association was thereby removed, the veil of mystery was for a time drawn back and God was revealed, not only as the Father of Jesus, but as the creator of the race into which Jesus was born. It is the clearest and most unmistakable revelation of the inherent sanctity of our human life, and of the relationship upon which its perpetuation depends. They were possessed of far keener insight, who

recognized that this doctrine was fatal to their dogma of the inherent and unconquerable vileness of matter, than they who find in it a reflection upon the sacredness of human life, inasmuch as for the Messiah to be born by the immediate power of God redeems unto sacred and divine meanings, birth and parenthood, and the physical life upon which these depend. He is not likely to degrade this power, who understands and believes that it was made the instrument, by the immediate power of the Almighty, for the renewal of human life and the redemption of the world.

Having met the chief objections which are to be urged on grounds of reason to the doctrine, it now remains for us to assign a place and value to it among our other beliefs. The most serious logical flaw in the usual arguments against the virgin birth is the assumption that it must be made the cornerstone of faith, or rejected as a myth.

Soltau says[1] that he would "gladly refrain from disturbing the childlike faith of those who have given themselves up in heartfelt Christmas joy to the spell of these unique legends—he would gladly refrain from this, if only the demand were not made at the same time, in all its coarseness, that the Christian, who, above all others, wishes to claim this name, shall not only be obliged to find in this story the foundation on which to build up his own character, but also to make it the basis of the whole of his Christian faith."

Soltau goes farther than this and rules out of the evangelical ranks those who still hold to the Infancy narrative. "*An Evangelical Christian*, that is to say, a Christian holding fast in his religious convictions to the gospel of

[1] Pp. 5, 6. See also Lobstein.

the apostles, and of the apostolic school, *is no longer able to believe in the supernatural origin of Jesus.*"

Moreover, so sure is he that it must be abandoned in order to maintain evangelical position that he hurls anathema against all who would still retain the second article as an ecclesiastical obligation. "Whoever makes the further demand that an evangelical Christian shall believe in the words, 'Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary,' wittingly constitutes himself sharer in a sin against the Holy Spirit of the true Gospel as transmitted to us by the apostles and their school in the Apostolic Age."

Verily, these are bitter words! It is very difficult for an American Christian to understand the spirit of Soltau's work. We do not thus anathematize and unchurch each other. We should not deny the title, "Evangelical Christian," to any man of whatever creed who claims the name and manifests the spirit of Christ, and we should naturally expect a like charity from him. We should reserve the right, which would be freely granted to him in turn, to judge whether or not his theology is in accord with the apostolic tradition according to our understanding of that tradition. Whether he could agree with us in saying the words of the creed would be for him, not for us, to determine, and we should allow him full liberty of assent and dissent according to his own conscience.

But I wish to confute the presumption that the miraculous birth must be either the foundation for the whole of our faith or a myth. Surely it may be neither the one nor the other. Because a stone is not the cornerstone, is no reason that it is not thereby resolved into a moonbeam or a cloudbank. It may be solid and have an appropriate place in the structure without being the cornerstone. The cornerstone of our faith is the divine-human Christ in

the totality of His self-revelation. We are brought to believe in the deity of Christ by the convergence upon it of many radiating lines of evidence, by the fitting together of many items of proof. The divineness of our Lord is too large a conception to rest upon any one item of evidence or proof. It is far too large to rest upon the miraculous birth. But this does not say that the miraculous birth is a myth. The deity of Christ is too large a conception to rest entirely upon the miracles, or the teachings, or the Resurrection; these are not, therefore, myths. The apostles, especially Paul, seem to talk sometimes as if the Resurrection alone were a proof of the deity of Christ, but we know well enough that they silently appeal to all that goes before the Resurrection. His resurrection would mean little without His life and character. The corner-stone of faith is Christ Himself. The miraculous birth, the life, the miracles, the teaching, the Resurrection, are all elements of His full manifestation, items in the proof of His deity. Each one of these items has a value in proportion to what it contributes to our understanding of Jesus.[1]

[1] The doctrinal significance of the miraculous birth has been persistently underestimated by its opponents. Excessive emphasis upon it as the sole or chief explanation of Christ's person, has worked out its usual results in a reaction just as excessive in which its meaning and value are altogether lost sight of. A careful study of the considerations urged by Dr. J. A. Dorner in his great work on the *History of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* would serve to modify and to correct that view in many minds. In the following note, I have taken up the chief points in Dorner's discussion; the whole section, however, should be carefully read.

Lobstein affirms that the Infancy narratives involve the idea of a "physical filiation;" that is, that the Sonship of Jesus is made to depend upon the mode of His conception. This notion appears to have been adopted from Dr. Dorner (*His. Doc. Person of Christ*, vol. i, Eng. Trans. pp. 52 seq.), but without taking into consideration all that Dorner says. We have already noticed in Chapter V, the objections to this interpretation of Luke. The Sonship of the Child is there made to depend more upon a unique relationship

The arguments from the comparative silence of Paul and John have this force and this force only. They show that the virgin birth is not the cornerstone of our faith in

to God and the Holiness resultant therefrom than upon the physical agency of God in His conception. Nothing is said in that verse about a miraculous birth. The power of God is to overshadow Mary in her conception, but nothing is stated as to the mode of that conception.

But there is another stronger consideration to be urged against Lobstein's "physical filiation" theory, and any interpretations of the documents which make Jesus' Sonship depend upon the mode of His conception. Dorner says: "There are principally three meanings which the phrase *ὑιὸς θεοῦ* has in these Gospels. The first we may call the physical (Matt. i, 23; Luke i, 35), because He has this name by nature, and on account of the mode of His birth. Of John it is said, 'He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb,' (Luke i, 15), where the existence of the person of John precedes the filling with the Holy Ghost. Of Jesus it is said, because He comes into being through the power of the Holy Ghost (Luke i, 35), because He is conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost (Matt. i, 20), and so is from a Divine Essence, He has the name Son of God (Luke i, 35, 32); there is in Him God with us (Matt. i, 23); God has in Him redeemed His people (Luke ii, 11), yea, all mankind (Luke ii, 14, 31); and He has become the Son of mankind, who brings in a new morning (Luke i, 78); inasmuch as in Him God is historically present. *And it is not one of the natures that has this name, but the entire Person.* (Italics mine.)"

Upon this last sentence, the whole notion that we are taught a "physical filiation," breaks down. It will not, I suppose, be contended that the entire person of Christ is made to depend upon the physical process involved in His conception, however exceptional these may have been. This would be traducianism gone mad. It is true that because He comes into being through the power of the Holy Ghost, because He is conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and so is from a divine Essence, He has the name, "Son of God;" but this process involves more than a "physical filiation." It would be incorrect and illogical to make the entire personality, physical and spiritual, of any ordinary human individual to depend wholly upon the physical process involved in His birth. Since there is an element in the individual for which physiology cannot account, so also must there be in the process by which He comes to be something which physiology cannot explain. Much more is it incorrect to make the entire person of the unique Man entirely dependent upon any process which can rightly be called a "physical filiation." In other words, a part of the process has been allowed to give its name to the whole. The miracle in the physical realm

Christ's divinity or sinlessness. To Paul, the Resurrection seemed the central fact in the revelation of Christ, to Mark the miracles, and to John the preëxistence and higher

is the symbol of a process with the realm of the spiritual. The entire being of Jesus was the special creation of God, but that process was something more than physical. There is, however, another serious objection to this physical filiation theory of the miraculous birth. If conceivably, the message of the angel to Mary might be interpreted thus, the teaching of the Infancy section as a whole entirely transcends this point of view. As Dorner says: "But what this is by nature and in itself, that must it become through a truly human development. So far as He verifies and morally realizes this His natural Divine Sonship, we have, thereby, the concept of the ethical Sonship of God (Luke ii, 52, 49, etc.)." In other words, the ethical Sonship of Christ just as much as His natural Sonship has a place in the Infancy section. Whatever may or may not be involved in the miraculous birth, it is but one element of the interpretation of Christ in the section. These two elements of the interpretation must be credited to the Infancy narrative, and it becomes at once apparent that this consideration alone does much to bring the Christology of the section into harmony with the rest of the New Testament. I take it that Dorner does not mean by "physical Sonship" what Lobstein means by "physical filiation," because the former uses the phrase "physical Sonship" as the equivalent of "natural Sonship," and he does not make his Sonship depend altogether upon the mode of his conception. I have found nowhere else so clear an understanding and interpretation of the relationship between the Christology of the Infancy narrative and the rest of the New Testament. Connected immediately with the sentence quoted above on the ethical Sonship he says: "That He also, in this sense, perfectly represented the Sonship of God, was, for the time preceding His public manifestation, attested by the utterance at His baptism (Matt. iii, 17). But as, without the physical (natural) Sonship as a presupposition, the ethical would be impossible, whereby He is the Holy One of God, the Sinless man, come to bring, above all personally in Himself, the good, the divine law, into actual manifestation (Matt. v, 17), but even on that account, in a perfectly human way, in a progressive manifestation, advancing through conflict (Matt. xix, 16, 17; Mark x, 18; Luke iv, 13; xii, 49, 50); so, without both, the physical and the ethical, the *third*, the official, would be impossible, which conversely is as naturally and necessarily the end of both these, as the ethical is of the physical. This third meaning of the phrase is indeed that commonly attributed to it as a designation of the Messiah by His cotemporaries; but this will not justify any in reducing the Christian idea of the divine Sonship within the meager limits

consciousness. To the later church the miraculous birth was important and for an excellent reason. Those who are disposed to deny that any special providential aid was

of the Jewish ideas of the Messiah. If we would know what concept the Synoptists and the first Christian churches had of Christ as God's Son, we must not ignore the first two meanings; if we do, we shall not obtain the historical representation of their idea of Christ in its totality. It is when we view them together, that we first come to conceive also His work. To those united to Him by faith (which He desires to be faith in His *Person*, Matt. xvi, 16, 17), He can, as He does, assume union with God only if in Him there is God-with-us."

In this noble passage Dorner brings out certain facts which have not always been kept in mind in the discussion of the doctrinal significance of the birth of Christ.

In the first place a full consideration of the incidents narrated of the Baptism reveals that Christ's whole previous life is implied. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," indicates a previous obedience (ethical Sonship) which is now rewarded by official recognition. The key to the words of approval spoken at the Baptism is to be found in the words addressed by the youthful Jesus to His mother in the temple: "I must be about My Father's business." But having gone thus far, we are compelled to go still farther. The key to the peculiar self-consciousness enjoyed by the Lad at twelve years of age, lies in the dawning sense of a special relationship which must be dated well back into the period of childhood, and can hardly be said to find any adequate explanation short of the distinctly Infancy narrative of the Lord's birth. The story is consistent and the parts hold together. If the Infancy narrative as a whole must go we have no explanation of the Baptism. The whole official career of Jesus as Messiah has no intelligible connection with His life before the ministry. We have an abrupt, catastrophic beginning for the ministry of Jesus. It is a building without visible foundations. And it seems to me that the theory issues in a practical depreciation of the importance of His non-ministerial life—the purely human life of service and preparation—which is very dangerous in its tendency. I have urged in another place that the incident in the temple in Christ's youth is necessary to an adequate understanding of the growth of His self-consciousness. Dorner links His whole Messianic career to that incident in a way that is at once exceedingly striking and suggestive. He is speaking of Christ's choice of the phrase "Son of man" as His own favorite self-designation. He thinks that while the phrase may easily have been taken from Dan. vii, 13, 14, it does not offer any explanation of His choice of that particular Messianic phrase. On

granted to the church will at least admit that she exhibited a positive genius for occupying vital positions, and for recognizing the near and more remote bearings of details

the contrary, this explanation is to be found in the peculiar quality of Christ's self-consciousness as primarily divine, and secondarily human.

"This designation must be the product of a self-consciousness for which the fact of human sonship, or being the Son of man, was not that which lay nearest to it, a thing of itself, a matter of course, but that which was secondary and superinduced. But if the self-consciousness of Christ were so modified that His being human was presented to Him as something secondary, then the primary thing in His consciousness must have been something else, that which is expressed in John xvii, 5; and the original wherein His self-consciousness knew itself immediately at home (comp. Luke ii, 49), must, at least from the time, when He had Himself entire, when His innermost reality came into being, have been divine."

We have then in the words spoken to Mary the primary consciousness of Jesus in expression. The secondary consciousness of His human nature comes later. "In this respect it deserves especial notice, that this apparently humblest name first occurs in the time of His maturest consciousness; first, therefore, when His personal self-consciousness has been perfected, and passes through means of the generic consciousness into the official." On the other hand this same consciousness rests upon the primary facts of His being. "In point of fact it is impossible that One, in Whom the divine was the primitive and constitutive, should be only one man among others, imperfect, or it may be, sinful like them. But in Him pure humanity must be presented as it nowhere else is; and that it may be so, even the *πνεύμα ἅγιον* (*i. e.*, the Divine Essence) forms the constitutive for the formation of His person. Since He calls Himself not a Man-son, but the Man-son, also not the Son of a man, but the Son of man, there lies therein of necessity, along with a perfect equality with others in what is essential to humanity; at the same time the intimation that He corresponds more perfectly than the others to the concept of man, that He is man of a nobler extraction, the pure Son of man." He also connects this fact which manifestly rests in part upon the peculiarity of His birth, Paul's doctrine of the Second Adam, who completes the creation of the first. See note (p. 55).

It is thus seen that even from all points of view the Infancy narrative cannot advisedly be omitted from the consideration of the Lord's person. This historical fact has a bearing upon our Lord's self-consciousness and upon the apostolic interpretation of His person which is far greater than appears from explicit statements.

upon the main fabric of faith. The miraculous birth was defended and emphasized because the denial of it was made upon grounds which, if admitted, imperiled the integrity of the entire apostolic faith. The miraculous birth was to the later generation of believers what the Resurrection was to the earlier—a vital and essential point.[1][2][3]

The importance of the miraculous birth, admitted as an historical fact, will be variously estimated according to what one is able to find in it. To some of us it seems to safeguard a complete and Scriptural Christology.

I fail to see any force in the attempt of Reville to force an incongruity between the theory of preëxistence and the miraculous birth, for a real incarnation involves just the completeness of surrender to human conditions as he denies, and the alternative theory implies that the human person-

[1] This seems to me the truth involved in Sabatier's statement quoted by Lobstein, p. 122.

[2] Eusebius shows that the virgin birth was supposed to be involved in any statement of the Incarnation (Con. Marcellum Ecc., Theo., ii, 11 and ii, 4).

[3] That any general affirmation concerning the Incarnation was considered to involve the miraculous birth is seen clearly from this fact, that the Nicene Creed, which is intended to be identical in every affirmation with earlier creeds, except in the fullness of the second clause which affirms the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, states simply that Christ "for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh having become man." That this sentence was interpreted as the exact equivalent of the earlier phrase of the old Roman symbol, "Born of the virgin Mary," is seen by the fact, first, that the clause was adopted without controversy as it certainly could not have been, had it been intended as an innovation upon previous belief. Second, by the statement of the Arian sympathizers at the succeeding council of Antioch in 341, who endeavored to make a statement acceptable to both parties to the controversy in which they affirm their belief that Jesus "according to the good pleasure of His Father, came down, and took flesh of the blessed virgin," etc. (Lumby, *Hist. Creeds*, pp. 55, 56, Cam., 1880.)

We have here another proof for the affirmation made repeatedly in this book that in the early ages no one denied the miraculous birth, who did not at the same time deny either the deity of Christ, or the reality of the Incarnation.

ality of Jesus was completely formed and afterwards united to the Eternal Logos.[1]

I am convinced that a profound Christology, which is in line with the apostolic affirmation, will find the miraculous birth too valuable to be discarded. In harmony with this is the critical investigation which points strongly to its historical reality.

Lobstein[2] quotes with approval Godet's remark on Keim's solution of the problem presented by the birth of Jesus: "While holding the paternal concurrence in the birth of this extraordinary Man, he admits a divine interposition which profoundly influenced and completely sanctified the appearance of this Being. This attempt at explanation is homage rendered to the incomparable moral greatness of Jesus, and we think it leaves untouched the great object of faith—Jesus Christ's dignity as the Saviour."[3]

Undoubtedly, this is true, but it suggests to one mind at least the extreme probability that if the disciples came so near to the truth as this in a question so mysterious and profound, they spoke by the word of authority and were altogether correct.

At least, we know that the New Testament writers made the clearest distinction between the activity of God in the giving of the sons of promise, and in the birth of Jesus.[4]

It seems to me that in the concession which Godet accepts in such conciliatory spirit, Keim though without knowing it, surrenders the vital point at issue and swings bodily over to the historic position.

[1] See discussion, Note E, end of volume.

See Lobstein, p. 133, note.

[2] P. 136.

[3] Cf. the acute observation of Martensen (*Chr. Dog.*, Eng. Trans., p. 276) on this theory which was also advocated by Schliermacher.

[4] See the remarkable passage in Keim, vol. ii, p. 47.

The statements of the first and third Evangelists stand the test of critical examination, and the historic fact is irreducible into legend or myth or dogma. The historical fact each one must estimate and value for himself. At least, we may, without ceasing to be intelligent and evangelical Christians, hold to the historic faith and with sincere and cordial assent repeat the words hallowed by ancient use and melodious to the believing ear: I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and Born of the Virgin Mary.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

NOTE A

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE DISCUSSION

There are certain features in the history of this discussion sufficiently striking and important to demand some separate treatment. The general trend of the discussion seems to have been widely misunderstood. The confident tone of the negative criticism, the somewhat timid and indecisive character of the defense, the weighty names which have been recorded against the documents have contributed to the establishment of a widespread conviction that the authority of the Infancy narrative has been finally and completely shattered, and, that in all candor the church must submit to the surrender of the documents and to the subtraction of the chief statement contained in them from the sum of Christian beliefs.

On the contrary, we most seriously maintain that the critical assault upon these sections is a failure, and that nothing more than a searching review of the discussion thus far is necessary in order to exhibit the solid basis for what must seem to many a most daring, not to say reckless, statement.

At the outset, I should like to call attention to the suggestive fact that, universally, tribute is paid to the beauty and sublimity of the Infancy narratives.

Even Soltau, who sneers at Luke as a historian, and makes of the Infancy narratives as a whole a mélange of pickings and stealings from all conceivable sources, is constrained to speak of them as "those unique legends." The attempt of Lobstein and others to save the narratives as Christian poetry or doctrine having a high religious significance and permanent spiritual worth though the product of the legendary temper, is a practical admission of the same kind. It is difficult to understand, however, how men can fail to see that the admission—that these narratives exhibit unique moral and spiritual characteristics—inevitably modifies the problem which they have to solve. The work which Cheyne makes in trying to account for the transformation accomplished in the adaptation of the primitive

legends as Christian narratives shows how difficult it is to maintain the mythical hypothesis in view of the peculiar qualities exhibited by the documents. On the mythical hypothesis, they have undergone transformation at the hands of men whose elevation above the moral atmosphere of heathenism makes their susceptibility to heathen influence very hard to account for.

Moreover, concessions go a step farther than this. There is a widespread tendency among negative critics to concede that the myth really embodies a historic doctrinal truth.[1] Keim's theory that Jesus was really supernaturally begotten though all the human agencies were present, which was itself borrowed from Schliermacher, has been repeated under various forms by several writers until it reached an *ad absurdum* climax in the theory advanced by Mr. Badham in the Academy for Nov. 17, 1894. This theory really involves the concession that the evangelists were right in the fact which they state (*i. e.*, that Jesus was supernaturally begotten), and wrong in their statement of the method by which that result was accomplished. It is a curious vagary of opinion which would concede the New Testament writers' ability to seize upon a transcendant fact which (upon the mythical theory) was utterly beyond their reach save by some special revelation or intuition, and at the same time attributes to them the weakness of combining this fact with a puerile fancy of their own as to how it was accomplished. It would seem that the same inspiration or intuition which gave them the fact would also aid them in stating the mode of its occurrence correctly.

These considerations, however, are comparatively unimportant. They simply exhibit the difficulty involved in the supposition that these narratives are of legendary origin. There is something of worth and reality in the documents which negative criticism cannot get rid of and cannot account for.

We pass to matters of larger moment.

Previous to the controversy over credal subscription, which was begun in Germany in 1892, the criticism of the Infancy narratives was simply a detail in the general attempt to reconstruct the history of the Christian documents. It was one item in a general campaign. In this discussion it cannot be said that the Infancy narratives suffered more severely at the hands of the critics than other portions of the New Testament. The general attitude of a critic toward the N. T. documents usually carried with it a corresponding attitude toward the Infancy sections.

Strauss is quoted by Lobstein as the pioneer in the negative criticism of the Infancy narratives, and this is correct.

But it is to be remembered that Strauss should not be quoted against the Infancy section exclusively, insomuch as he was the assailant of every cardinal fact in the New Testament narrative. It should be remembered,

[1] Cf. W. P. Du Bose: The Gospel in the Gospels, 1906.

also, that in the person of Strauss, Christian criticism committed suicide and ceased to be Christian. The Tübingen theory of the origin of the New Testament dealt impartially with all the documents, ranging them on the one side or the other of the great Pauline-Petrine controversy according to the alleged tendency of each. In this distribution, the Infancy documents shared with the others, but suffered no more severely than they.

The great controversy over the strictness of credal obligations in Germany concentrated the attention of critics upon the Infancy sections. It cannot be said, however, that in the subsequent discussion the documents really were given a fair chance. The struggle was for a freedom of belief and doctrinal interpretation within churches adhering to the Apostles' Creed, and the second clause was seized upon as a salient point of attack. The feeling engendered by this discussion was intense and the controversy became exceedingly bitter. Soltau's book, in which he fiercely anathematizes those who would make belief in the virgin birth a part of credal obligation and denies the evangelical standing of those who accept the narratives in the historical sense, is a fair evidence of the state of mind of the parties to this controversy. In such an atmosphere truth is bound to suffer. Upon one who begins the study of this controversy without strong prejudice, the impression that the Infancy narratives have been unfairly treated is overwhelming. The genesis and the history of the controversy accounts for the fact. The historicity and authority of the narratives, in which occurs the statement of the virgin birth, were strategic points which must be taker in the interest of an embattled liberalism.

Precisely analogous is the history of the discussion in England. The controversy concerning the birth of Christ and the documents of the Infancy was precipitated by the publication of the volume entitled, "Essays and Reviews," by distinguished clergymen of the Church of England. This book was a joint plea on the part of a number of men with advanced views for a larger liberty in interpreting the historic creeds of the church. It will be seen at once, I think, that in a controversy precipitated for the purpose of gaining freedom from the pressure of over-tense credal obligation, the document upon which is based the statement of the creed on the subject of Christ's birth is in extreme danger of not being treated on its merits.

Belief or nonbelief in the statement becomes the badge of a party. Men come to the study with the strong bias engendered by a prolonged and bitter controversy, and the tendency to follow other men without reëxamining the subject is very great.

In England, the controversy has been concerned not so much with the historic trustworthiness as with the doctrinal importance of the statement. The Contemporary Review for August, 1902, contains an admirable summary of the discussion in English church circles. The entire contention of the article is that differences of opinion concerning the virgin birth are

compatible with loyalty to the Christian faith. This contention is supported by citations from eminent thinkers of various shades of opinion as to the importance, from a doctrinal point of view, of the historic statement. A few quotations will bring the reader in touch with English thought on this subject.

Dean Fremantle holds that the question concerning the mode of the Incarnation is not of primary but of secondary importance. The Bishop of Worcester, in a course of lectures on the Historic Trustworthiness of the Gospels, says, concerning the virgin birth: "It was not a part of the apostolic testimony, which was testimony to that which they had seen and heard, beginning from the baptism of John until the Ascension." This writer further contends that at no time was belief in the Incarnation asked on the ground of the virgin birth.

Dr. Sanday says: "There is this difference between the virgin birth and, for example, the Resurrection, that whereas the latter was fully divulged and believed in by the church almost from the moment of its occurrence, the former entered into the common faith slowly and by degrees, and by a channel which was apparently private rather than public; entered into it we might say, by a side door (though as we believe by the express appointment of the Master of the house) rather than by the broad public entrance. If any one desires to claim the benefit of this difference, I think we ought to let him; only, on the other side when this is done, we ought, I think, in strictness to set against the partial silence of the apostolic age the very marked emphasis of the age that immediately followed that of the apostles." These quotations might be multiplied indefinitely, but from those already made the tenor of the whole discussion may be readily apprehended. There need be no hesitation in admitting the secondary importance of the question of Christ's birth as compared with a central, all-embracing doctrine such as the Incarnation, but that, with this concession freely made, the historic statement of the Gospels is of greater importance than many seem to think, is, to my mind, perfectly evident. With the utmost readiness to grant liberty of thought and interpretation within the church, there are three considerations which should urge us to hesitate before yielding to an attitude of indifference on the subject of Christ's birth.

The first consideration is the character of the criticism which has resulted in such widespread repudiation of the Infancy narratives. It has been said that the Infancy documents have not been fairly treated by critics. I must refer the reader to the volume itself for extended evidence for the truthfulness of this statement. At this point, I wish to call attention to just one item in the evidence. Much has been made on the negative side of this question of the discrepancies between Matthew and Luke. From Strauss to Gardner (in Contentio Veritatis) the two accounts have been set against each other and forced into contradiction.

Now, let the reader suppose that, without any knowledge of a controversy pending, he should come upon two brief documents occupying but a few printed pages each, purporting to be the narratives of the same events, but from different points of view. He finds upon examination that while the two documents diverge in certain particulars, they converge upon six chief statements of fact, upon which the significance of the entire series of events depends. Then let him take up an attack upon the documents such as Lobstein's, in which, first, all possible use is made of discrepancies between the two narratives and then, second, the convergence upon these chief statements is met by alleging that documents separately untrustworthy have little force in witness to common facts. What would be the impression made upon his mind? There could be but one, namely, the impression made upon my mind by a wide review of the literature on the negative side of this subject; that the documents have been unfairly treated. What testimony to any great historic event could withstand the pressure of such treatment? What historic event, to which there is the testimony of more than one witness, could be admitted? It is my firm conviction, as before expressed, that the same treatment which has been accorded to the Infancy narratives would not only disintegrate the New Testament, but leave most other historic documents a matter of shreds and patches.

This consideration is immeasurably strengthened by a second which I would urge in demurrer to an attitude of indifference on this subject, namely, the general critical position, in regard to the statements and documents of the New Testament, of those who plead for this larger liberty.

There is a delusion abroad in the land that many critics and scholars, otherwise in harmony with the historic position of the church, occupy the negative attitude toward this one item of traditional Christian belief. Who are they, and where are their writings? Personally, I do not know of one conspicuous name which can be urged against the miraculous birth alone of the Christian statements. There may be and undoubtedly are some English writers pleading for a liberty for others which they do not ask for themselves, who agree, in occupying a negative position on this one question. But in general, controversy over credal obligations both in Germany and England involves not only the birth but the resurrection of Christ. The men from Strauss onward, including Keim, Harnack, Lobstein, Soltau, Beyschlag, Cheyne, etc., who reject the miraculous birth, reject also the doctrine of the preëxistence, the physical resurrection, and the ascension of Christ in the historic sense in which the church has always held to these credal statements. The same criticism which has, in these minds, discredited the Infancy documents has also broken down the testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and his ascension into heaven. Let us see how the matter actually stands.

The Bishop of Ripon in his introduction to the Temple Bible under the

head of Relation of Moral Supremacy to miraculous element, says: "Now, in the common stock Gospel, the miraculous accessories connected with the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ do not find a place. These accessories are found in the group of secondary witnesses, in narratives common to two evangelists. Upon these, in the first instance, we have purposely refused to lay stress; our belief in Jesus Christ must be based upon moral conviction not on physical wonder."

There is a good deal of confusion of thought in this statement, but the general idea may, perhaps, be attained. It is, of course, true that rational faith in Jesus Christ must be based upon moral conviction rather than physical wonder; but it is also true, that so far as the first disciples of the faith were concerned, the moral conviction upon which their faith was based was due in no small measure to the physical wonders through which the moral qualities of love, compassion, and benevolence, which distinguished the Christ were revealed, and I am not convinced that the case is materially changed even now. The "common stock Gospel" theory has been refuted often enough and need not detain us now. But there is still more serious confusion to resolve. What does the Bishop mean by the "miraculous accessories" of the birth and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which are testified to by two evangelists? So far as the birth is concerned, the miraculous birth itself must be meant, for that is supposedly testified to by only two of the evangelists. But as to the Resurrection, the case is different. The empty tomb is testified to by all four evangelists (Mark, ch. xvi, Matthew, ch. xxviii; Luke xxiv, 1-3; John, ch. xx); the vision of the angels is testified to by three witnesses (Matthew xxviii, 8-10; Mark xvi, 5-7; Luke xxiv, 4-8); the meeting of Jesus and the women by two witnesses (Matthew xxviii, 8-10; Mark xvi, 9). The visit of Peter and John to the tomb by two witnesses (John xx, 3-10; Luke xxiv, 12). The appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene is supported by two witnesses (John xx, 11-18; Mark, ch. xvi). The appearance of the Lord to Peter rests upon two evangelists and Paul (Mark xvi, 12, 13; Luke xxiv, 13-35; 1 Cor. xv, 5). The appearance in the midst of the apostles in the absence of Thomas is spoken of by three evangelists (Mark xvi, 14-18; Luke xxiv, 36-49; John xx, 19-23).

The appearance to the apostles when Thomas was present is spoken of by John only (John xx, 24-29). The appearance to seven at the Sea of Tiberias is testified to by one evangelist, namely, John. Again, the meeting with the apostles and the five hundred in the mountain of Galilee is testified to by one evangelist and corroborated by Paul (Matthew xxviii, 16-20; 1 Cor. xv, 6).

Now if by "miraculous accessories" the Bishop refers to the things which are testified to by two evangelists or less, everything goes save the empty tomb, the women's vision of the angels at the tomb and the appearance to the apostles in the absence of Thomas. These statements seem to

belong to what is called "the common stock Gospel." Perhaps it is unfair to draw inferences from statements so loose and inexact, but the general impression made upon one's mind by the sentences is that the miraculous birth and the miraculous physical resurrection are alike rejected as lacking in confirmation at the hands of the evangelists. At least we are justified in inferring that the Bishop is uncertain in his belief as to the reality of the "physical" resurrection,—that, like the virgin birth, is a "miraculous accessory."

Cheyne's general attitude toward the whole question is seen in his book (Bible Problems), in which he takes the four statements of the creed, the Virgin Birth, the Descensus, the Ressurrection, and the Ascension, all done-over heathen myths. This scholar's attitude is also seen by the fact that the articles in the Ency. Bib. (of which he is an editor) on the Gospels and on Mary were written by Schmiedel, who holds that we have but five absolutely credible passages about Jesus in general in the Synoptic Gospels.[1] Harnack denies the reality of the physical resurrection and the preëxistence of Christ in anything but an ideal sense. Prof. Sanday (quoted above) and Rice (in Christian Faith in an Age of Science, p. 358) hold that the miraculous birth and the Resurrection are not equally supported by evidence. That the arguments for the Resurrection are so much stronger that the two statements do not belong in the same class. One would expect, therefore, that in many instances the reality of the Resurrection would be held by many who reject the narrative of the birth. There may be such, but they are not sufficiently prominent to have made any visible impress upon the literature of the subject. Gardner in "A Historic View of the New Testament" may be taken as a fairly chosen exponent of the negative attitude toward the miraculous birth. Taking up once more a passage, a part of which has been quoted already, we find this statement: "In the early church the two views which dated the divine origin of Christ, the one from His birth, the other from His baptism, were rivals. It was only by degrees that the former was established as orthodox, and the latter branded as heretical." Now, this last statement should be qualified by another, that this conflict does not appear in the New Testament, and that the church had no hesitation in choosing between the rival theories from the moment that it appeared that the dating of Christ's divine origin at the Baptism was due to notions which denied any reality to the Incarnation. But the most significant statement is to come. After having brought into artificial opposition the story of the birth and the story of the Baptism, the writer coolly throws both of them aside. He says: "In fact, both the tale of the miraculous birth and the tale of the miraculous baptism are early and somewhat crude attempts of the Christian Church to give embodiment to the great idea of the Incarnation." We are not surprised to find after this that Professor Gardner holds a "continuous spiritual presence" theory of the Resurrection, which denies any objective

[1] Ency. Bib. pp. 1881 f.

historic reality to the occurrence to which the disciples testify. If any one supposes that the story of the miraculous birth is rejected by these men on the ground solely of a lack of adequate testimony, Gardner's book alone would be sufficient to dissipate that notion once and for all. He refers to the oft-quoted statement of Mr. Huxley's, that on the basis of his scientific experience he would be prepared to accept a partheno-genesis if adequately supported by testimony, and then clearly intimates that the great scientist has yielded to a momentary impulse to credulity which the writer could not share nor sympathize with—in other words, that no amount of testimony would convince him of the reality of the occurrence. This statement of Gardner (which follows very closely the one quoted above) is conclusive evidence of the fact that his attitude on the subject of the birth story is due not to any specific weakness in the narrative itself but to a settled and resolute attitude of dislike and incredulity toward the miraculous in general. And what is true of Gardner is characteristic of the negative school as a whole. The real underlying vital question is not whether the testimony to the miraculous birth is on an equality with other statements of the New Testament, but whether any testimony could be accepted as adequate for the establishment of such an occurrence. So far as the Infancy naratives are concerned, they have not been studied with an open mind, but under a pre-judgment due to the influences of a comprehensive philosophical dogma. It seems to me perfectly clear from the history of the discussion that the critical principles which compel to the rejection of the Infancy narratives would carry one to a negative position as to the trustworthiness of most of our Christian documents.

Once more I urge as a demurrer against yielding to a position of indifference on this question, the sacredness of a historic fact, all doctrinal considerations apart. The English controversy has centered about the question of the importance of the virgin birth in the realm of Christian dogma. It has been asserted by the whole liberal school with vehement asservation that whether fact or not, the mode of Christ's birth is a matter of secondary importance. It is the whole question of the kernel and the husk, the form and the essence of a Christian doctrine. There is undoubtedly a distinction between the form and the essence of any human statement of truth, but for the sake of clearness of thought, it is needful to ask ourselves just how this distinction applies and to what sort of statements it is legitimately applicable. It is certainly applicable to such a difference as exists between the Atonement and Anselm's theory of the Atonement or between the Incarnation and Athanasius' or Godet's interpretation of it. The Atonement is an eternal fact, the substitutionary or moral influence theory of it is form. But what possible application has this distinction to the question of the Lord's birth? This is a simple historical statement which is either true or false. The distinction is made in the phrase "the Incarnation and the mode of it,"

but the distinction does not hold. No matter how often the statement is repeated there is no evidence to show that in the minds of the New Testament writers, the virgin birth was a theory constructed to explain the Incarnation, and hence, a temporary or provisional form of statement for an essential truth. In point of fact, the statement of the Incarnation was a subsequent development. The historical order was not, first, the conception of the great fact of the Incarnation and then as a derivative and explanatory notion of the virgin birth, but first the virgin birth along with the other facts of Christ's life and, then, as a corollary and derivative from all these facts, the doctrine of the Incarnation. The theory of the Incarnation was the gathering together into one explanation of the whole substance and detail of Christ's self-revelation.

Now, as a supposedly historic fact, based upon testimony, the virgin birth has a different standing and a different relationship to the essence of Christianity than any dogma however important. If we once get the right point of view, this will at once become self-evident. President Rush Rhees, of Rochester University, said, in a recent number of the Biblical World, that we must in all candor admit that the virgin birth of Christ "contains nothing essential to the loftiest Christology."

Now, there is a point of view from which this contention urged by so many is true, there is another from which it is utterly incorrect. From the view point of a practical religion, it is true that a man may possess a lofty Christology without so much as considering, let alone believing in the virgin birth. A man may adore and follow Christ, in the fullest sense accepting him as Lord, and thus be the possessor of the loftiest Christology, who cannot give, to save his life, a connected account of one scene in the earthly life of the heavenly Lord whom he loves and serves. The absence from this man's mind of any one incident of the Lord's life may not detract from the clearness or the splendor of the vision in which he lives. I hold that there are many men—among them I do not scruple to name Martineau—who follow the heavenly Christ even though they have dealt severely and even savagely with the records of Christ's earthly life. It cannot be too often emphasized in the interests of Christian charity that the possession of the heavenly life is in a measure independent of the possession of a reasoned theology. Life is first, reasoning upon it second. One may have the first and never reach the second.

But there is another view-point than that of the plain religious man to whom theology is naught, and it is worthy of careful consideration in this connection: The view-point of the thoughtful theologian, to whom the things of God form the subject of life-long study. The scientific and constructive student of the life of Christ ought not to be altogether overlooked and from his point of view every ascertainable fact is sacred and essential. Science has at least taught us that all fact is sacred. The

number of quills in a bird's wing matters little to one who is rapt merely in delighted contemplation of its flight, but to the scientist it is a matter of vital moment; whether ants have a queen or not means little to the business man, but we know that the last hours of a dying scientist were sweetened and consoled by the thought that he had discovered the long hidden secret of ant life.

Whether Christ was born at Nazareth or Bethlehem, conceived by the Holy Ghost or brought into the world through the paternal agency of Joseph, may seem to be a secondary matter from the view-point of religious sentiment, but to the careful student it is a question which he has no right to leave until he has reached a firm conviction. The fact, whatever it may be, is sacred and divine. Agassiz put the truth once for all when he said, "A physical fact is as sacred as a moral principle."

And the connection between historic facts and the essence of Christianity is a closer and more vital one than may at first sight appear.

Cheyne has a great deal to say about the relationship between form and essence, and he quotes with hearty approval certain words of Baron von Hügel in his work, "Du Christ Eternal et de nos Christologies Successives," (1904), from which I wish to take a few sentences for their bearing upon the question now under review. "The idea of the Incarnation supposes and contains, on the one hand, a limited series of historical phenomena, on the other, an unlimited reality and power which can be reached and which communicates itself to us across these phenomena." He further holds that these phenomena are to be dealt with by historical methods. He continues, and this is the expression with which we are especially interested: "Let criticism do its work. Upon its completion there will still remain undebatable facts enough for the needs of religion." Ah, then, some facts are needful for religion! There is an imaginable line, beyond which, if criticism should carry us in denial of the "historic phenomena" of Christianity, religion would be no longer possible.

The one thing needful for religion is a Saviour who is adequate to the task which our human sin and need put upon him. But how do we know that Jesus is such a Saviour? The "historic phenomena" form our warrant. The Christian man has been in the habit of saying that the ground of our faith in the Saviourhood of Christ is that he was such a being, as exhibited in His birth, in His life, in His teaching, in His miracles, in His death, in His resurrection, in His ascension, as could do for us what we need to have done. But this warrant lies in the region of "historic phenomena," and we must wait for criticism to do its work before we can be sure how many facts we may have. Von Hügel is sure that we shall have facts enough, but we should like to know what the warrant of this confidence is. The history of the negative criticism of the New Testament is no sufficient guarantee of this happy issue. Had there been, during past years, noth-

ing but radical criticism presented to the world, Christianity would have long since been bankrupt so far as "historic phenomena" are concerned. To mention Strauss again, the critic left not enough "historic phenomena" even for his own soul to find a resting place within the faith, and was obliged to surrender the name of Christian. The author of Supernatural Religion, who never had the courage to give a father to his attack upon the faith of his countrymen, left not enough historic phenomena to form any reasonable ground of assurance to one who would be a rational Christian. Faith was saved, under God, by patient, learned scholars of the "Apologetic Camp" such as Weiss, Tholuck, Godet, and Lightfoot who battled for the Christian facts and gained them back one by one until, from the ruins that Strauss left, we have come to the point that Harnack is constrained to admit that in its main outlines the life of Christ is beyond the reach of question. And the points at issue in much of this controversy are, to be sure, historical phenomena, but phenomena with which essential Christianity is bound up, for the historic phenomena form a part of the revelation of the Son of God. What He is forms the vital essence of Christianity and what He is these things help us to know. If we give up the miraculous birth, the resurrection, the ascension of Christ, as nonessential to Christianity, have we left creditable witness to the facts, adequate to bear the strain of a belief in the Incarnation of the Son of God? We might conceivably give up one, but the critical principle which takes one of them will make a clean sweep of them all.

But is not our contention justified, that the birth statement must be studied first of all as a fact because if it is a fact, it is divine, and sacred, and essential? The loftiest Christology, be it always remembered, is that which is true to all the facts. If this statement is correct, we are entitled to call the specific critical assault upon the birth narratives a failure because the critical presupposition which it demands carries the critic too far and lands him in an attack upon the New Testament documents all along the line.

The bias under which this discussion has been conducted is well illustrated by Lobstein. In the note appended to his book, in which he furnishes a guide to the literature of the subject, he speaks of those who occupy the negative position as the "historical and critical school," and of those who have defended the documents as belonging to the "Apologetic Camp." He does not say, but most clearly implies that it would be impossible for a historical and scientific scholar to stray into the "Apologetic Camp."

There is no necessity of feeling hurt at such designations. Adjectives are cheap. But I am anxious to reach a definite and satisfactory conclusion as to what constitutes a historical and scientific criticism. It would seem, on general principles, that a historical and scientific criticism would be a criticism based upon documentary evidence, and candid and careful examination of all the facts; a criticism free from prejudice and leading to some definite

conclusions. It was something of a surprise that a scholar, who has reached favorable conclusions upon the authenticity and authority of the Infancy is thereby necessarily excluded from the class of scientific and historical critics and passes into the "Apologetic Camp," that expression meaning, I suppose, that he is classed as a defender of the documents at any cost to science and history. Such an arbitrary definition has its advantages, for without it some opponents of the Infancy narratives might fail of recognition on any other basis than their negative position as scientific and historical. Some of the theoretic vagaries indulged in by the negative school on this question of the Infancy narratives almost surpass belief.

Is Soltau, for example, "scientific and historical" when he takes it for granted that because in the year A. D., 66, Tiridates and certain Magians came on a visit to the Emperor Nero, that therefore, of necessity, Matthew's account was an adaptation of that incident?

Is Schmiedel (See En. Bib., Art. Gospels) historical and scientific when he cites the statement of Philo concerning the miraculous origin of the sons of promise without calling attention to the fact that such statements were purely and deliberately allegorical and so understood by all who were intelligent enough to become acquainted with his writings: or when he derives from the arguments of the apologist Justin with a Jew, in the middle of the second century, after the connection of Christ's birth with the Immanuel passage had become fully established in Christian thought and the meaning of the passage had become the only disputed question, a theory as to the origin of the virgin birth from the passage, which must have taken place at least two generations earlier?

Is Lobstein himself historical and scientific when he deftly evades the question of chronology which is the crucial difficulty of his whole theory of the origin of the virgin birth statement?

Is Beyschlag scientific when he admits a historic basis to the entire nexus of events recorded in the Infancy narratives, and without any adequate reason denies the reality of the miraculous birth itself, making of the narrative sober history with one wretched bit of mythological tinsel embroidered upon it?

Is Conrady scientific and historical when he not only makes the simple, direct, straightforward, historical narratives of the first and third Gospels an elaborate, subtle, Hebraized transformation, in every detail, of the Osiris-Isis Egyptian myth, but also, in order to fortify this grotesque theory makes the twofold Gospel narrative a derivative from the Protevangelium of James, which, practically every one else who has ever read it recognizes to be from one to two generations later?

Is Reitzenstein historical and scientific when he takes a ragged bit of Egyptian papyrus which cannot be traced farther back than the end of the second century, with a corrupt text and meaningless narrative due evidently

to a complete doctrinal misunderstanding and makes it the immediate derivative and representative of an older and more authentic document than our Gospels; and derives the canonical narrative from this nameless and hypothetical document in the existence of which we have no sure ground of believing at all?

Is Cheyne scientific and historical when he repeatedly goes beyond the documentary evidence in the support of his theories? He claims a definiteness for the Messianic expectation during the period immediately before the coming of Christ (p. 73), for which there is a conspicuous lack of documentary evidence, and he also alleges, in the absence of direct evidence, the existence of myths which are needed to account for a biblical statement in accordance with his theory.

Is Cheyne critical and historical when he seriously urges a parallel like the following? (Cf. pp. 88 and 106): "I will confine myself here to mentioning one remarkable traditional story which cannot very well be passed over, that of the Babylonian King Sargon of Agade, who flourished about 3800 B. C? It is a legend of mythic origin, and represents the great king as having been born of a poor mother in secret, and as not knowing his father. There is reason to suspect that something similar was originally said by the Israelites of Moses, and would it be strange if a similar account were given of the birth of Jesus Christ, the second Moses?" (P. 86.)

This brilliant bit of parallelism suggests a question as to the necessity of going so far afield for analogies. This may be scientific and historical criticism, but to the uninitiated it looks far more like what Cheyne describes as a "substitute for history addressed to the pious imagination." (P. 92.)

The imagination seems to have had a more important part in the formation of the theory than either the historical or scientific sense.

But, the negative criticism, as has been intimated before, is open to attack in another way. It has issued in an inescapable tangle of mutual contradictions. It is, of course, necessary to remember the limits to the fair use of this argument. Bossuet's argument against the Reformation drawn from the Variations of Protestantism and George Henry Lewes's argument from the History of Philosophy that philosophy is impossible, are alike open to the objection that they ignore all positive results, and treat only of differences of opinion without recognizing the solid element of unanimity which underlies the variations both of philosophy and of religion. But for the negative criticism of these documents we can make no such allowance. The critics differ not merely as to the interpretation of facts, but also as to the facts to be interpreted. They agree in nothing save dislike and depreciation of the documents. Their theories are mutually destructive. Let us take up a few details under this general statement.

One of the major arguments of the opponents of the narratives is that the two are in contradiction. It is claimed that they cannot be reconciled. Lobstein affirms that they differ in the very bond that unites them. I have urged that this contradiction is forced and artificial, the result of hostility to the documents, not the cause of it.

O. Holtzmann says:[1] "Between these two accounts of Matthew and Luke, no contradiction exists, even with regard to the localities there is no reason to suppose any." With one stroke of the pen in this sentence the writer expunges the work of his predecessors in undermining the trustworthiness of these two narratives. If the narratives do not conflict, the opposition to them receives a checkmate and here is a critic who denies the authenticity of the narratives and does not believe in the miraculous birth, but who denies the validity of the argument drawn from alleged discrepancies. Beyschlag, as has already been stated, admits a historical basis to the entire narrative of the Infancy, and Holtzmann admits that there is no reason to question the substantial historicity of the narrative of the visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve, both without apparently recognizing the logical implications of this admission as to the character of the documents under discussion.

But, of course, these are mere opinions and somewhat arbitrary opinions at that. The contradiction goes far deeper than this. It appears in connection with Isa. vii, 14. This verse may be said to have played the part of the protagonist in almost all the theories which have been built to account for the rise of the Infancy narratives. It is not too much to say that from Strauss to Häcker, who writes in the February (1906) number of Hilgenfeld's Journal (Zeitschrift für wissenschäftliche Theologie), that nine out of ten of these theories[2] absolutely require the assistance of Isa. vii, 14 in order to stand.

It is interesting, therefore, to discover that Cheyne absolutely rejects the use which has been made of this text by his predecessors, including Prof. Harnack, whom he mentions by name. He claims that not only does the mistranslation (?) of Isa. vii, 14 fail to account for the idea of the virgin birth, but is itself a phenomenon to be accounted for.

He urges that Isa. vii, 14 is useful for the purpose of accounting for the idea of the miraculous birth only as the part of the general theory of a Messianic "dogma," which controlled the apostolic interpretation of Jesus. Of this more hereafter, but at this point I wish to call attention to Canon Cheyne's explanation of the use in Matt. i, 22 of the Immanuel passage. He says: "As for the quotation in Matt. i, 22, it is perfectly well accounted for as one of the subsidiary biblical proofs which were habitually sought

[1] Life of Jesus, Eng. Trans., p. 85.

[2] As for example those of Keim, Lobstein, Soltau, Harnack, Conrady, Beyschlag, etc.

for by the evangelists. The real supports of their statements were traditions of one kind and another, but their belief in the written word of prophecy led them to look for a justification of these statements in the prophetic Scriptures, and with this amount of justice, that sometimes the traditions and the prophecies had a common origin." He quotes with approval "another scholar" (Dr. A. Wright), who says: "We cannot allow that this error gave rise to the doctrine. In this as in other cases where quotations from the Old Testament are introduced. . . . . the quotation is later than the context (Synopsis Introd., p. xli)."[1]

By this sentence the vast majority of theories which the critics have elaborated with such patience and learning are thrown into ruin.

Now let the reader place over against each other this statement of Cheyne's, in which Isa. vii, 14 is thrown aside and Harnack's statement in which the theory of heathen origin is dealt with in the same summary way, and the deep and fatal line of cleavage which runs through all of these explanations will be made manifest.

All conceivable theories which are made to account for the origin of these narratives as legends are compelled to resort either to Hebrew Messianism, or to Heathen Mythology. On the one hand, those whose eyes are open to the intensely Hebraic character of the narratives are compelled to reject at once the theory of heathen influence; on the other hand those who realize that such a myth could never have grown up on Jewish soil are driven to heathenism for a probable source, while both theories are broken on the facts.

Cheyne's theory attempts to close this chasm by alleging heathen influences through Hebrew channels. He holds that the heathenism which appears in these narratives has already for a matter of decades been domesticated and Hebraized. This theory has its own difficulties as we have already seen. It must be admitted, however, that Cheyne and the German school whom he represents, notably Gunkel, are the only writers on the negative side of this question, who seem to have any adequate realization of the magnitude of the problem which they are attempting to solve. The mythological schools are justly open to the charge of wholesale credulity. The acceptance of much of their reasoning would compel one to hold that there is a very close analogy between a comet and a fox, both having long tails, but they do realize what they have to prove. And the burden which rests upon them is to show this: That there was in heathenism an "international myth"[2] which by adoption in Hebrew Messianism, became a "Christological dogma,"[3] having certain definite features, such as supernatural birth, resurrection, ascension, etc., which reappear in Christianity with the simple change of a personal application to the historic Jesus of Nazareth, by whom the dogma is filled out. It

[1] Cheyne, Bible Prob., pp. 194-5. [2] Cheyne. [3] Gunkel.

seems to me to be necessary simply to rise above the details which are urged in support of this extraordinary theory to a simple outline of the theory itself in order to pronounce its final condemnation. In the first place, supposing that conceivably, this international myth of a world Redeemer with the startling details of birth, resurrection, ascension, etc., could be proved, so far from proving Christianity mythical it would simply serve to make mythology Christian. Keeping in mind that the most distinctive thing in Christianity is Christ Himself, not the things which happened to Him, which are secondary in so far as they are revelations of a fact greater than themselves, it becomes at once evident that in this international myth we have a world-wide foreshadowing of Christ compared with which, in vividness and power, the old theory of Messianic prophecy would fade into dimness.

But the whole theory is beset with difficulties on all sides. It breaks, in both aspects of it, upon the multiplicity of incidental and contradictory details. The analytical genius of the great mythologists has been enabled to evolve out of the chaos of heathen mythologies a certain underlying unity, a system of far-reaching analogies. But is it conceivable that the uncritical mythological ages had any such conception of great and massive unities? To the ordinary student, heathen mythology is one of the most laborious and wearisome of all forms of study. Most readers of church history, for example, skip many pages when they come to the subject of Gnosticism. It takes a mind of a peculiar order to be a mythologist, with patience to search for and hold and frame together remote resemblances. What a commanding, intellectual genius must have been among the disciples, or their pupils, in order to choose out of the confusing welter of ancient heathen mythology just the details suited to set forth the earthly life of the Saviour of men! To tell us that such a choice was made spontaneously, by naïve and untutored men, is mere child's play. Taking for example, the subject with which we are now dealing, the difficulty comes before us in all its cogency. The alleged supernatural births of heathenism are of all kinds and of all degrees, from the supernatural generation by the power of the sun god Ra in Egyptian lore to the descent in the bosom of a star of the posthumous heavenly child in Zoroastrianism.

By what subtle process of elimination and choice was the precise mode of Jesus' birth attained? The multiplicity of details brought forward in support of this theory has destroyed it. And this is equally true of Hebrew Messianism. The anxiety of Cheyne to postulate a development toward definiteness in pre-Christian Jewish Messianism which is not justified by the documentary evidence is explainable enough. He needs it for the sake of his theory. But the evidence is against the theory. A reading of the pre-Christian Jewish literature will convince any one not wedded to a thesis that a definite, detailed Messianic expectation, with simple, uncon-

tradictory portrayal of a virgin mother and a divine child is not contained therein. It would puzzle one to find anywhere aside from Isa. vii, 14 and the verse in which the "growing up" of the branch in Isa., ch. 53 is described any passage in which the Messiah is spoken of as a child at all. As a matter of demonstrable fact, the current Messianic expectations of the Jews for a century or more before Christ came, were inchoate and confused. We have already dealt with this and need not take it up again. In a word this international myth, which is alleged to have been carried over into Judaism has no such definiteness either in outline or detail as to make it possible that it has created the Christian narrative.

But, even yet, we are not through with the difficulties connected with this theory. On the basis of the theory as stated by its advocates there is a synthesis to be made between the mythology and the Messianism before anything consistent can be resolved.

According to the theory the basic idea of the definite Messianism developed out of Dan. vii, 13, was the "Son of man." But the basic notions of the original mythology was the Son of God or of the gods. The supernaturally begotten beings were creatures in whom the divine, not the human, was emphasized. Certainly in the Daniel passage—if the passage refers to a person at all—the emphasis is upon the human element,—a being like a son of man. The supernatural is not ignored, but thrown into the background. Here, then, we have a transformation, which must be accounted for. The notion, out of which the mythological interpretation of Jesus, if such we must call it, grew, was a sense of His unique, supreme divine significance. What value to such thought would Dan. vii, 13 have? In the Gospels themselves, the two ideas, Son of man, and Son of God, appear, but in such peculiar relationship as to create one of the great problems of New Testament interpretation. The title "Son of man" is the favorite self-representation of Jesus, while the expression "Son of God" was the expression used by the disciples. Now the history of the interrelation of these two expressions is very interesting. This expression is used in Matthew thirty-two times, in Mark fifteen times, and in John twelve times. Jesus used the title "Son of God" very seldom and then usually in speaking of Himself as the Son, or accepting their designation and thus indirectly claiming it. Now, it is evident that the disciples were not under the influence of the passage from Daniel, else they would have used the title "Son of man." Rather they drew the belief which they expressed in the words "Son of God" from the way in which Jesus spoke of the Father and from the general tone of His life. It is evident that while Jesus constantly spoke of Himself as Son of man, making of it a Messianic title, the disciples did not consider it fitting that they should use it, preferring the emphasis upon His divinity given them by the title "Son of God." In other words, an almost complete severance is maintained between the titles "Son

of man" and "Son of God," and the disciples, supposedly under the influence of Messianism created by the Daniel passage, do not use the phrase based upon that passage; while Jesus Himself, whose claims they are supposed to have exaggerated in the title "Son of God," almost never used that title.

The disciples then reached their conclusions as to the person of Christ, not in obedience to any myth-making tendency, but as necessary inference from what they saw in Jesus' life. Had they been myth-making in the interests of His Divinity they would never have put on record, as coming from Jesus Himself, a phrase so open to a doubtful construction as the "Son of man," which, both to superficial thought and to deeper study, emphasizes the human element in His being. The transformation of the heathen myth, if there was such a myth, in Daniel destroys its significance in this study, for it is separated entirely from any formative influence in the faith of the disciples.

The conclusion follows that if the heathen influence is not found in the pre-Christian documents, it is not to be looked for in the New Testament. The multiplication of instances of marvelous births among the heathen has no significance unless a connection can be definitely established with the authors of the Christian documents. The sea may be swarming with strange creatures, but this matters little to him who stands upon the shore. The fantasies of heathenism cannot explain documents written by men who are not accessible to heathen influences.

In all these theories, the nexus between the heathen ideas and the narratives, which they are supposed to explain, is imaginary and not real. The attempt to connect the two cycles of thought breaks down. The latest advocate[1] of this Protean and slippery theory attempts to bring the heathen birth-stories close to the New Testament through Philo's allegories and the birth-wonders of the Old Testament. This is positively the nearest approach of heathenism to the New Testament. Here, if anywhere, the bridge is to be built. But in order to form the connection, Häcker is forced to make a number of statements which not only cannot be proved, but seem to me capable of emphatic disproof.

In the first place, after saying what is unquestionably true, that to pure Jewish feeling the birth-relationships taught in the heathen myths were a horror, he states that in the period immediately preceding the birth of Christ there was no longer any pure Jewish feeling. I hold that this last statement is as incorrect as the former statement is correct. That pure Jewish feeling had wholly departed from Israel is surely a reckless statement, which the history of the period fails to confirm. Most cogent evidence against it is furnished by the Infancy documents themselves.

Where will you find, even in the Old Testament, more thorough and

[1] Häcker, referred to above.

genuine Jews than the group of people, who are brought together by the Infancy narratives; and where will you find purer Jewish feeling than breathes in the narratives themselves? Every line of those beautiful stories contradicts the statement that pure Jewish feelings had vanished from Israel.

The second statement of Häcker's which is open to serious question is that in the Messianic expectations of the Jewish Apocalyptic, this heathen fantasy of supernatural birth played, "as it were, first violin." What is the documentary foundation for this extraordinary statement? After a careful study of Apocalyptic literature, I have failed to find any other foundation for it than some references to a sudden and miraculous manifestation of the Messiah, but of a miraculous birth from a human mother, I find not so much as a hint. Häcker refers to the Haggadic adornment of the life of Moses and Philonian parables, both of which are useless for the purpose, and then by an extraordinary exhibition of mental agility, he lands upon the conclusion that it is very possible that the virgin birth was a Judaic Messianic dogma. If this be so, Justin's argument with Trypho takes a strange and unaccountable turn, for the question ought not to have been whether the passage in Isaiah really means that the Messiah should be virgin born, but the purely historical question whether Jesus was thus born or not. Can any one, on the basis of this figment of a Messianic dogma of the virgin birth, account for the comparative silence of the New Testament on the subject?[1]

A third statement of Häcker's which is open to question is that the transition from the birth-stories of the Sons of Promise to the virgin birth was but a single step. This statement cannot be supported. The difference between these two notions is not a step, great or small, but the transition from one world of thought into another utterly different. It is not a step, but a chasm. The gift of children in response to prayer, to two parents who have hitherto been disappointed, is one thing; the conception of a child by the immediate creative activity of an unseen and spiritual God is quite another. As we have hitherto contended, the disciples lacked the initiative to pass over this great distance. Moreover, the motive for passing it is lacking. There is no reason for supposing that the Jews would consider birth from a virgin more honorable than birth from a married woman, while they certainly could not be blind to the difficulty and danger of the statement.

In short, Häcker's attempt to bridge the chasm between heathenism and the New Testament is a rope of sand. It cannot bear its own weight, let alone the weight of the theory which it is supposed to sustain.

Moreover, all these arguments aside, there is one further consideration which ought to be very carefully canvassed. Is Christianity a syncretism?

[1] See Steele, Meth. R. Jan. 1892.

In answering this question, I wish to quote no less an authority than Fairbairn. In his great work on the Philosophy of the Christian Religion (pp. 517 ff.), he says: "Strictly speaking, religions are not made, they grow; for growth is the process which life follows when it builds up an organism for its own inhabitation and enlargement. Opposed to growth is the process we may call contrivance or manufacture, which is represented in religion by syncretism, by the conscious selection and adjustment of old materials to create a new cult or system. Now this process has been known in both ancient and modern times, the age in which Christianity was born being particularly familiar with it. There were Romans who affected to think of the East as religious and wise, of Egypt as venerable and mysterious; and it became a Roman fashion to seek from the strange deities and rites of the Orient replenishment for the exhausted native sources of inspiration.

"But Syncretism in religion, like eclecticism in philosophy, is a sign of decadence, for it creates nothing that outlives the age or coterie that gave it birth. It signifies that mind, fallen into conscious impotence and hopelessness, has turned its back upon the future and its face to the past; and despairing of producing or achieving anything, has begun to call upon vanished men and systems for principles which may help it to live. The mood is, as a rule, self-conscious and cynical as well as despondent, and so the formulæ it borrows, it builds usually to the music of a little disdainful and finical criticism, into a house of consolation and amusement rather than a temple of truth and worship.

"The last religion we could describe as a syncretism is the Christian, and that for many reasons, though it will be enough to mention here two: (a) Its founders were too completely ignorant of other theologies and philosophies to be affected by them; and (b) it was not an articulated skeleton, but a living organism carrying within itself the principle of life.

"This does not mean that it was without relationship to the past, for without the persons, ideas, customs and influences it inherited, it never could have been; nor that it was isolated from the present, for if it had been untouched by living forces, it could not have reached living men. But it means that it behaved as a living being behaves, who, while the issue of a long ancestry, yet grows by transmuting into his own substance the matter his own environment supplies. In other words, the religion grew because it lived, and it lived because it carried within it an imminent and architectonic idea, which governed it, and yet was essentially its own. That idea was the belief it held concerning Jesus Christ, which double name denoted at once the historical person who was the first Christian and the transcendental ideal which had transformed God and religion, man and history."

That syncretism is the evidence of religious decadence, the sign of the

closing of an era, not its beginning, is capable of the most abundant illustration and proof. That Christianity, the most potent and revolutionary faith that ever entered the world, should be touched at the very beginning of its triumphant career with this mark of senility is unbelievable. The story of the birth of Christ is no heathen notion adhering to the New Testament, but a vital and consonant element in the portrayal of the unique Person in whom Christianity consists. The miraculous conception, and the normal birth and childhood of Jesus, indicated both His unity with our humanity and His transcendence in it as the "ideal which has transformed God and religion, man and history."

We quote again from the same author a striking and truthful description of the Infancy narrative and its relationship to the rest of the Gospel. "They (the Evangelists) inherited an august conception of Deity, the least anthropomorphic, the most untouched by human passion, weakness, or mutability, known to antiquity; and to represent this God as the Father of Jesus, without degrading or undeifying Him, was a literary task of the rarest delicacy and difficulty. In the mythical age of Greece, it had been easy to imagine men as the sons of Zeus, and Zeus as the father of gods and men; but the more the mythical age receded, the more its crude images and grotesque dogmas grew distasteful to the Greek intelligence, which refined deity by making him too abstract to stand in real or concrete relations with men.

And what philosophy had done for Greece, the monotheistic passion did for Israel, with the result that the more Jehovah was exalted, the greater became His distance from man, and the less could the sons of God be conceived as mixing with the daughters of men. The sublimest things are the most easily made ridiculous, the most sacred can be most utterly profaned. And if any one had been asked beforehand to describe the probable action of the idea of Jesus as the Son of the Most High on the idea of God, would He not have drawn a dismal picture of Majesty lowered into dust, spiritually coarsened and materialized, and reason humbled by being carried back into that twilight of intelligence when as yet gods were indistinguishable from men? But the result is exactly the opposite. The supernatural birth is touched with a most delicate hand, and has no essential feature in common with the mythical theogonies which earlier ages had known. The marvelous thing is not that we have two birth stories, but that we have only two[1]; and that they occupy so small, so incidental, so almost negligible a place in the New Testament as a whole."[2] From this statement, one can see how utterly impossible it is in view of its

[1] The importance of this statement ought not to be overlooked. In all heroic myths, birth wonders are multiplied in great numbers. See *e. g.*, Jackson: Life of Zoroaster, chap. iii, pp. 23–35.

[2] Phil. Chr. Rel., p. 348 f. The whole section ought to be read.

spiritual value to separate the birth narrative from the rest of the New Testament. It is inherently harmonious with the rest of the portrait; it was drawn under the same general influence and inspiration.

Once more, the attack upon the Infancy section is weak from the doctrinal point of view. I have tried to be very careful throughout this book to lay no more stress upon the miraculous birth than belongs to it as one of the historic facts in the earthly life of Jesus. It is one of the items in the portraiture of Him which in its totality forms the basis of our faith.

In much of the controversial literature on this subject, the distinction is sharply drawn between the primary importance of the great doctrine of the Incarnation, and the secondary importance of the miraculous birth as constituting merely the mode of its accomplishment. The Incarnation is essential, the miraculous birth is non-essential. Now so long as one is content to hold the Incarnation as a general fact and refuses to think upon the question of the mode of its accomplishment, it is possible to treat the birth as a negligible factor. But the instant one allows the mind to reflect upon the question of the mode of the Incarnation, the importance of the birth becomes at once apparent. As a matter of experience, it is impossible to remain in a permanent condition of suspended judgement as to the mode by which the Incarnation was accomplished.

Historically, there seem to be but two alternatives. The rejection of the Infancy narratives and the miraculous birth with the implication that the life of Jesus was miraculous throughout and that His sonship to God was unique from the beginning seems, logically, or at least historically, to issue in the dating of His Sonship and Divinity at the Baptism. This was the view of Cerinthus. This also is the view of Soltau, and Prof. Corrsen has given the opinion new currency by the astonishing theory that the first appearance of the Logos was at the Baptism when Jesus was a grown man thirty years of age and the Lord said: This day have I begotten thee.[1]

Is it conceivable that the life of Jesus should be divided into two parts, one of which should be non-miraculous throughout, the other inaugurated and carried forward by miracle? Is it conceivable that an absolutely new beginning should be made in the life of Jesus at the Baptism? Is it conceivable that such a career as that of Jesus between the Baptism and the Ascension could have been accomplished without any foregleams, any indications to Himself or to others of the career which was in store for Him? Did the voice from heaven fall upon ears altogether unprepared by anything distinctive and peculiar in His previous experience and His consciousness of relationship to God?

But this is not the whole of the contradiction. This theory binds together in unnatural union a non-miraculous and a miraculous being, a humanistic and a divine Christ. It is unscriptural, for it describes a man

[1] Corrsen in Gottingischegelehrte Anziegen, 1899, pp. 310 ff.

becoming God, not God becoming a man. It is illogical because if Jesus was the Son of God sent into the world at the Baptism, He was also the Son of God sent into the world an hour or a year or thirty years before the Baptism. He was the same person from the beginning to the end of His life. The Messianic career of Jesus began at the birth; the Messianic consciousness of Jesus was a matter of continuous growth from the dawn of consciousness to the full orbed glory of that dedicatory hour at the Jordan; the Messianic Person of Jesus was the same throughout His entire life. Before the Baptism, Jesus was the Messiah, in preparation and obscurity; after the Baptism He was the Messiah acknowledged and at work, but both before and after the Baptism, He was the Son of God set apart by every implication of His being to the Messiahship. The tree is in the germ. If we could have a complete life history of it, we should see one phase of growth opening into another continuously—the unfolding in a vital process of what was enfolded from the beginning. So it must have been in the career of Jesus. His entire life from the beginning to the close must have been one and the same. If He was the incarnation of the Eternal Son of God, that incarnation must have been coterminous with His life. If His person was ever miraculous, it must have been miraculous throughout. The miracle was concealed until the manifestation at the Jordan, but it was none the less real. The voice from heaven said to Him, "Thou art my Son, in Whom I am well pleased." [1] Does any one seriously contend that at that moment Jesus became the Son of God? Obviously the voice acknowledged the Sonship of Jesus tested by obedience and sacrifice through the hidden years.

In the narrative of the wedding at Cana, it is said: "This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory"—that is, unveiled His character. Is it believable that the divine quality of His life thus manifested dates merely from the Baptism?

My contention is that this theory which dates the divine origin of Jesus at the Baptism divides His life into inconsistent sections and undermines the entire doctrine of the Incarnation by giving us two different persons, and two different lives, one before and one after the Baptism. [2] This is altogether

[1] The variant reading, "This day have I begotten thee," is too obviously an echo of Psa. ii, 7, to be of any authority.

[2] "In the evolution of the doctrine of the Incarnation in early Christian Theology, it was made evident that the union of the preëxistent Son of God with humanity could not have taken place at any time after birth, whether at the Baptism, the presentation in the temple, the birth itself, or at any other conceivable time. It must have been before birth and in the conception itself. . . . The philosophical difficulties which beset the doctrine of the virgin birth do not concern the virgin birth in particular, but the Incarnation in general. Indeed, the doctrine of the virgin birth seems the only way of over-

unsatisfactory. The Messiahship of Jesus resides in His person. The person was made known in the life. The life must have been one and the same throughout. Whether one believes in the statements of the Infancy narratives or not, something akin to their central affirmation must be postulated in harmony with the rest of His life. It is perfectly logical to deny the miraculous in the life of Jesus as a whole, including birth, baptism, resurrection, and ascension.

It is perfectly consistent and logical to say that concerning the period anterior to the Baptism we have no authentic information, and must be content with what we know of the mature life of Jesus.

It is consistent and logical to hold the miraculous birth as the natural and fitting inauguration of the miraculous life. It is neither consistent nor logical, critical nor historical, to affirm an ordinary birth and childhood as constituting the person of One who carried forward a miraculous ministry. This is one of the halfway positions with which history deals so severely.[1]

In two ways the logical faculty has avenged itself. Many have been driven to an abandonment of the miraculous altogether, combining under one consistent mythical or allegorical category all delineations of the superhuman Messiah. Others have been compelled to adopt the theory of a miraculous birth, though with the subsidiary agency of Joseph, to account for the unique sanctity of Jesus. This theory, which has been referred to several times in the text, labors under the double difficulty of affirming the

coming the chief difficulties. If the preëxistent Son of God became incarnate by ordinary generation, we could not escape the conclusion that a human individual person was begotten. The Incarnation would then not be a real incarnation, but an inhabitation of Jesus by the Son of God, with two distinct personalities, that of the preëxistent Son of God, and that of the begotten son of Joseph. Nestorianism could not be avoided. Such a merely external union of the divine Son with a human individual could not accomplish human salvation, as the Christian Church has always clearly seen. If the Son of God only inhabited the man Jesus, He might save that man, but how could He accomplish the salvation of the human race? Such an inhabitation of the Son of God would not differ in principle from the indwelling of the divine Spirit in a man. The man Jesus would be a prophet, a hero, a great exemplar, but not the Saviour of mankind. He might be the last and greatest of the heroes of faith, but not God incarnate. Only a God-man who had taken human nature into organic union with Himself and so identified Himself with the human race as to become the common man, the second Adam, the head of the race, could redeem the race. The doctrine of the virgin birth gives such a God-man. Natural generation could not possibly give us such a God-man. Therefore, the doctrine of the virgin birth is essential to the integrity of the Incarnation, as the Incarnation is to the doctrine of Christ and Christian salvation." C. A. Briggs, *N. A. Review*, June, 1906.

[1] See Orr, *Chris. View of God and the World*, p. 100.

supernatural in Jesus' birth while running counter to the only documentary evidence which we possess on the subject. It really amounts to the *à priori* assumption that a miraculous birth could take place in one way only. It also destroys the symbolic value of the event by making it a secret act of God for which there can be no visible evidence.

But its real significance here lies in the fact that it constitutes a most striking confession of weakness. It means that an adequate and historic Christology which is true to all the facts cannot do without a miraculous birth. In short, and this is the gist of the whole matter, in this controversy concerning the birth of Christ, two fundamentally different Christologies are grappling for supremacy.

According to one, a human Jesus of Nazareth, by some process of apotheosis, became the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world. According to the other interpretation, the Eternal Son of God became incarnate by birth of the virgin; by a voluntary self-impoverishment entered the world as a child and lived as the Son of man.

Which one of these two interpretations is that of the men of the New Testament, there can be no question.

Since, therefore, the affirmative or negative position on the subject of the birth of Christ involves so much of vital importance, the specific attack upon the Infancy narrative, apart from the rest of the Gospel, must be pronounced a failure.

NOTE B

THE ORIGIN AND PUBLICATION OF THE INFANCY NARRATIVES
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

It is the purpose of this note to gather up and combine the scattered items of evidence as to the origin and circulation of the birth narratives. Since these narratives have been the object of specific assault our present task is simply to exhibit their standing relative to other documents of the New Testament. As there are many rival theories in the field as to the number, character, and composition of these documents it is to be noted that the conclusions of this note are not bound up with any one of these theories. It is purely a comparative study. To begin with, as has already been stated, the textual standing of the narratives is unimpeachable. The attempts which have been made to disintegrate the narratives or to separate them from the rest of the Gospels has been a signal failure. In every main statement they stand attested by the best manuscripts—with such unanimity that we have a right to affirm that in their present form they belonged to the written Gospels and were circulated with them from the beginning.

In addition to this, in style, point of view, and literary purpose both narratives belong to the Gospels in which they are found. (See Weiss: In. to N. T., Eng. Tr., 1889, vol ii, p. 277, note.) It has been noted that even in the matter of the Matthean genealogy the author has worked in accordance with the ruling ideas of the Gospel (see H. B. D., vol iii, p. 302 L. Cf. also Weiss above, p. 273).[1]

In the case of Luke, we note that almost every conspicuous feature of the Gospel as a whole is exhibited in the Infancy section, (cf. Simcox, Writers of N. T., pp. 19-22. See Plummer, Com. on Luke, § 6, pp. xvi–lxvii. We are thus led at once to the position that the Infancy narratives have a right to share in the confidence extended to the Gospels in which they are found. So far, there is not the slightest ground for questioning their authority or value.

Passing now to the documents which are supposed to underlie the present written Gospels of Matthew and Luke, we seek an answer to the question: What are the standing, characteristics, and history of the documents underly-

[1] For a thorough study of the unity of the section see Machen, Pr. Rev., Jan., 1906.

ing the narratives of the birth of Christ? We are met at once with the statement that the Infancy narratives were not contained in the "Primitive Gospel"; *i. e.*, the common document lying back of the three Synoptists. Weiss gives only one reason for not placing the Infancy narratives in this document. In the same note referred to above, he says: "That they (chaps. I and II) cannot indeed belong to the Apostolic ground work of the Gospel, since the author evidently did not know that the parents of Jesus dwelt originally in Nazareth (ii, 22 ff.), was already perceived by Eichhorn and Bertholdt."

The argument is, of course, that if the author of the section had access to a primitive document of the Infancy he would have known (on the supposition that the document embraced the facts stated both by Matthew and Luke) that the family of Joseph had lived formerly at Nazareth and returned to their old home after the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem.

The argument is far from convincing. As has already been pointed out, what Matthew says about the cause for the return to Nazareth is in no possible contradiction with a former residence in Galilee. The account does not say that Joseph did not formerly reside in Nazareth. It does imply, of course, that he did not return to Nazareth on account of that former residence.

It does not come within the scope of his narrative to mention that former residence. Indeed there is reason to suppose that the evangelist would have preferred to omit reference to that fact if he could. Why it should be inferred that he did not know about it, I fail utterly to see. The writer is interested in the train of causes which brought about the permanent residence of Jesus in Nazareth, and made Him known to His contemporaries as a Nazarene. All the conditions of Matthew's narrative would be abundantly fulfilled if an intention on the part of Joseph to settle at Bethlehem upon his return from Egypt was thwarted by the warning which sent him to Nazareth. This argument of Weiss is not sufficient to cut off the Infancy narrative from the Primitive Gospel.

Another reason has been urged in favor of this idea which has far greater cogency. It is said (by Wilkinson: Early Hist. Gospels, Mac., p. 14): "The narrative of our Lord's birth would for obvious reasons be kept secret, and the evidence seems to show that it had no place in the Logia." The earlier part of this we shall consider more closely a little later. For the present, let us take for granted that the statement concerning the absence of the Infancy narrative from the primitive source is true. This being granted the question arises: What was the nature of this document, and what did it contain? It is of course impossible to be perfectly certain as to the contents of a document which we have never seen except in combination with other documents, but by general consent we may safely consider certain conclusions as reasonably assured. The Primitive Gospel (to take Dr. B. Weiss's

interpretation of it) consisted of a loosely connected series of apostolic memorabilia, beginning with the baptism of John and ending with the word of Jesus concerning the woman who anointed Him in the house of Simon the Leper. This document was drawn up, perhaps, by Matthew to serve as an aid to memory, and perhaps as a manual of catechetical instruction. The probability seems to be that it was written in Aramaic and circulated from Jerusalem sometime in the sixties of the first century (see Jolley, *Synoptic Problem*, Macmillan, 1893, for a convenient summary of the subject. Jolley bases his work on Weiss and gives a restoration of the P. G. Cf. Weiss, In. N. T., vol. ii, p. 227).

This document is supposed to be a common source from which all three Synoptic Gospels are in part drawn. It is to be noted here with distinct emphasis that this document did not contain any account of the birth, the death, or the resurrection of Jesus. The purpose of the document was to furnish inquiring Jews with evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus. The aim was didactic and not biographical. The absence of any account of the passion and resurrection is accounted for by the fact that such an omission "is natural enough in a writing primarily intended for the Christians of Judæa, some of them witnesses of the Crucifixion, and all, probably, familiar with the incident of the Saviour's Judæan ministry, as well as with the events immediately preceding and following the Passion, especially when we remember that the author had no intention of writing a biography."[1]

The total disappearance of this primitive Gospel as a separate document is accounted for on the ground that a Gospel which contained no account of the birth, death, or resurrection of the Saviour would possess little interest for later generations of Christians (Jolley, Ibid, p. 89). So far, then, the narratives of the Infancy stand upon precisely the same ground as the narratives of the Passion and Resurrection. Both are lacking and apparently much for the same reason (*i. e.*, being aside from the purpose of the document) from the Primitive Gospel.

Jolley is the advocate of an elaborate documentary theory of the origin of the Synoptic Gospels. He assigns the entire life of Chirst to various sources, traditional information obtained by the author himself, Mark's Gospel, the Primitive Gospel and the lost Ebionite Gospel. Jolley says: "Such a scheme can at best be only approximately accurate, for the authors, though often copying from, have usually modified the passages based in their written sources, and have at times so combined their written sources both with one another and with independent and, as it would seem, not always trustworthy tradition, as to render a perfect analysis impossible (p. 114)." Had he added that a perfect analysis is unattainable also because occasionally the critic's acumen fails, the above statement would have been the gainer both in truth and modesty.

[1] Jolley, Syn. Prob., p. 74.

Taking as a working basis, Jolley's Analysis, our present task is to ascertain the relative authority of the passages with which he classes the Infancy sections. Be it said at once that Luke's narrative (Lk. ii, 3-52) he assigns to the "lost" Ebionite Gospel which he defines as a document "written for Jewish-Christian readers, and presented traces of those doctrines which at a later time and in a more developed form were called Ebionite." This document he takes to be the primitive precursor of the second century Apocryphal Gospel of the Hebrews. It will thus be seen that Luke's narrative goes back to a primitive Hebrew-Christian document.

Matthew's narrative is classed with passages due to the evangelist, and gathered from traditional sources. These passages aggregate three hundred and thirty-six verses, nearly one ninth of the entire Synoptic material. Making an analysis of these we find (1) that in many instances the assignment to a separate source cannot be allowed to stand. It destroys the sense, breaks up the connection, and leaves both the passage removed and the context without meaning. In order to test the validity of this criticism let the reader examine Jolley's analysis of the fifth chapter: Verses 1 and 2 are assigned to tradition; 3–9 to the Primitive Gospel; 10 to tradition; 11–22 to P. G.; 23, 24 to tradition; 25–28 to P. G.; 29, 30 to tradition; 31–40 to P. G.; 41 to tradition; 42–48 to P. G.

Of these 1 and 2 are introductory and practically paralleled in Mark iii, 13, but may be allowed to stand as the evangelist's own note; verses 3–9 are assigned to the Primitive Gospel while 10 goes to tradition and 11–22 to P. G. But verses 11–22 carry out the same idea as 10, and the statements are paralleled in Luke vi, 20–23, which the author assigns to the Primitive Gospel. It would not be unallowable to assign even disconnected sentences in such aphoristic speech as this sermon to different documents on the ground of the lack of immediate connection, but here he has separated closely connected sentences. Take another instance. Verses 23 and 24 are cut off from what precedes and what follows, but verses 22 and 23 are grammatically connected, and verse 25 is logically connected with 24. Certainly, whatever may be done with the rest of the verses, 24 and 25 ought not to be separated. Again, verses 25 to 28 are assigned to the Primitive Gospel, while 29 and 30, connected closely in thought with 28, are assigned to tradition. In addition to this verse 25 and 26 join closely with 23 and 24, and are totally different in theme from the passage 27f. Verse 41 is thrust in between two passages (31–40, and 42–48). It would be perfectly safe to challenge any one to exhibit any dislocation of thought between verses 40 and 41, and between 41 and 42f, such as for example is clearly apparent between verses 37 and 38. Now it is not affirmed that these verses do not come from separate sources, but attention is called to the fact that the assignment is open to objection at every step. A careful study of Jolley's whole scheme is enough to convince any one that the assignment

to various documents is an exceedingly difficult and precarious undertaking (cf. Mark iii, 13–17; iv, 12–16 with Jolley's scheme, p. 114). (2) In many instances the passages are paralleled in Mark's Gospel as well as in Luke's. In some instances the wording is slightly changed while the idea is evidently derived from the common source. Cf. Matt. iv, 23–25 with Mark i, 39; Matt. viii, 17 with Mark i, 32ff; Matt. ix, 36 with Mark vi, 34; Matt. x, 17, 18 with Mark xiii, 9; Matt. x, 39 with Mark viii, 35; Matt. xii, 31–37 with Mark iii, 22 in connection with Jolley's scheme. (3) Most of the passages placed by Jolley in the class with the Infancy narrative are self-authenticated by peculiarities of thought and style as belonging to the genuine Gospel. See Matt. v, 25–28; ibid 41; vi, 1–6; xvi, 17–19; xviii, 16–22; xx, 1–19; xxi, 28–32; xxiii, 1–3. Concerning the teachings and incidents recorded in these passages there is very little question as to their validity and authority.

While we are upon this subject it might be well to compare with the Infancy narratives two really suspicious passages, the authenticity of which has been seriously questioned. One of these is the ending of the Gospel of Mark (xvi, 9–20), the other the account of the woman taken in adultery and brought to Jesus (Jno. viii, 1–11). As to the former, it is well known that there are two endings to the Gospel of Mark. The longer ending is found in the regular versions—a shorter ending at the eighth verse in many manuscripts. The external evidence is divided—the preponderance of authority being against the passage. The internal evidence is also rather unfavorable. It does not seem to fit the rest of Mark's Gospel. As Dr. Hort put it: "It is a condensed fifth narrative of the Forty Days."[1] Nevertheless, it is quite impossible to throw this section out altogether.

As Jolley says (Syn. Prob., p. 112) "There is, however, a small but by no means insignificant minority who maintain that they are an integral part of the Gospel; whether spurious or not the disputed verses are very ancient. If not genuine, they must have been added early in the second century, for they were certainly known to Irenaeus and probably to Justin Martyr."

Contrast with this the standing of the Infancy narratives with textual authority unanimously favorable and with a manifest history that puts them well within the first century.

The other disputed passage is of a different kind. John viii, 1–11 is, textually speaking, a floating passage. The place and order of this incident present an unsolvable enigma. It is sometimes placed in the eighth chapter, sometimes at the end of the Gospel, and sometimes in Luke's narrative. It is evidently a fugitive piece. It is missing from some of the best manuscripts and ancient versions and was looked upon as suspicious from a very

[1] See *H. B. D.*, vol. iii, pp. 251f Art. Gos. of, Mark.

early day. There are arguments on the other side, of course (see Farrar L. C., vol. ii, p. 61, note), and it will always remain a problem.

Against the authenticity of the passage as a part of John's Gospel, Edersheim (L. and T. J. M., vol. ii, p. 163, note) presents an argument which would seem to destroy the authority of the incident altogether as a part of the authentic Gospel. He says: "That a woman taken in the act of adultery should have been brought before Jesus (and apparently without the witnesses to her crime); that such an utterly unJewish, as well as illegal procedure should have been that of the 'Scribes and Pharisees'; that such a breach of law, and of what Judaism would regard as decency, should have been perpetrated to 'tempt' Him, or that the scribes should have been so ignorant as to substitute stoning for strangulation as the punishment for adultery; lastly, that this scene should have been enacted in the temple, presents a very climax of impossibilities." Nevertheless, in spite of all these undoubtedly serious objections the passage in question has always held its own, and will probably continue to hold its own as a part of the Gospel narrative, for this simple reason. It presents a perfectly inimitable picture of the character and attitude of Christ. It may be that John did not write it; it may be that in some measure the narrative has become confused and distorted, yet that it presents an authentic revelation of the Lord, the vast majority of people will continue to believe.

Once more, making comparison, we see how strong and unassailable is the standing of the Infancy narrative. If the story of the woman can authenticate itself against such objections, external and internal, how much more firm is the position of the Infancy narratives against which no such arguments can be drawn.

Jolley's scheme represents one method of solving the Synoptic problem. We have found a place for the Infancy narrative among the documents attributed to tradition, the vast majority of which are perfectly well authenticated portions of the narrative. In order to reach some more definite conclusions, we shall next review briefly a totally different method of accounting for the three Gospels. Dr. Arthur Wright lays far greater emphasis upon oral teaching as a mode of preserving and transmitting the Gospel tradition. In our judgment his work (Com. of Four Gospels, Macmillan, 1890) is nearer a correct representation of the actual facts than Jolley's.

As to the difference between the two theories on the subject of documentary and oral tradition, Plummer rightly calls attention to the fact that "the difference between oral tradition and a document is not great when the oral tradition has become stereotyped by frequent repetition."[1]

Nevertheless, the fact that much of the Gospel teaching was given for

[1] Plummer, Com. on Luke, § 3, p. xxiii.

some time in the form of oral memory lessons, must be given due weight in accounting for the written Gospels.

In brief outline Wright's theory is as follows: Mark was a catechist who wrote down, after Peter's death, the memoirs which he had been teaching. After the separation of Paul and Barnabas, the latter with Mark sailed to Cyprus where they lived and taught in retirement. They were thus out of the reach of all later developments of doctrine. Peter's memoirs were practically the sum of Mark's knowledge and teaching.

As Mark was the instructor of the Greek catechists, the author of the First Gospel and Luke must have been his pupils. Mark's arrangement of the memoirs was symmetrical rather than chronological.

The bulk of the Synoptic Gospels consists of three cycles of oral narratives: (1) Peter's Memoirs, (2) Matthew's Utterances of the Lord, and (3) Anonymous Gospel current only in Gentile churches, which ultimately came to be written. Now passing over all details we come at once to the question which is vital to our present inquiry—where do the Infancy narratives come in, and what is their standing?

Wright classes Matthew's Infancy narrative (in its present form), which he says may have been added to the tradition by Matthew himself or under his direction, with certain fragments of oral gospel outside the cycles. Of these fragments in general and especially those concerned with post-resurrection incidents, he says: "There is nothing in the nature of things to prevent these fragments from possessing the highest historical value. Abundance of eyewitnesses must have existed in Jerusalem, who were ready and anxious to tell what they knew about the events of Holy Week. And it would be wanton incredulity to reject what they say. But still the obscurity of the origin of these fragments and the late date at which they were probably added to the tradition lead us to put them upon a lower historical level than the Petrine memoirs."[1]

It will be seen that, while he classes the narrative of the first Gospel with these fragments, he does not put them on the same historical level.

Prof. Wright denominates Luke's narrative of the Infancy as "non-oral"—that is to say that it is based upon documentary sources. He holds that Luke's first two chapters read like a direct translation from the Aramaic. He says: "They are far more Aramaic in form than even St. Mark's Gospel. The reason of this we take to be the simple fact that they never were in the hands of Greek catechists, who inevitably and unconsciously Hellenized what they taught."[2] He also says of the Infancy chapters that we can pretty confidently affirm that they were never in the hands of the catechists, at least in their present Greek dress."[3] Of the Infancy narratives in the first Gospel, he says: "They certainly were taught orally, as is shown by the suitable length of the sections, by the

[1] Page 102. [2] Page 145. [3] Page 112.

division of the genealogy into three parts arranged into decatesserads to assist the pupil's memory, and above all by the fact that they were present in the Gospel according to the Hebrews as well as in our first Gospel."[1]

At this point a strikingly interesting fact emerges. According to Jolley, Luke's Infancy narrative goes back to the Ebionite Gospel (see Syn. Prob., Appendix D, p. 115).

According to Wright (see also Wilkinson Hist. Gospels, p. 22—with this also arguments of Prof. Chase agree) the Infancy narrative was contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews. In the nomenclature of the two books, these documents are practically the same. The Ebionite Gospel (according to Jolley) was the predecessor of the second century Gospel of the Hebrews. In the particular of the Lord's birth they were the same. If these conclusions are correct, we have traced the twofold narrative back into a common document lying behind the present Gospels, which incorporated them both. Prof. Wright thus summarizes the whole question as to the origin of these narratives: "It is important to observe that though St. Luke's account of the mystery of the Incarnation (the Lord's birth) is entirely distinct from that in the first Gospel and has no reference either direct or implied to Isaiah's prophecy, yet both evangelists attest the same fact. The Incarnation, like the Crucifixion and Resurrection, presents one of the very few cases in the Gospels, in which we really have the testimony of two men. Nay, more, its presence in the first Gospel declares it to have been accepted in the East; its presence in St. Luke proves its acceptance in the West. The fact itself transcends human experience and must always remain a matter of faith. Still to admit it is easier than to deny it, for without it the very existence of the Gospels and of Christianity is inexplicable. St. Peter's memoirs imply quite as much as St. John's Gospel records, 'that the word became flesh and dwelt among us.'"

The judgment of any New Testament passage as to its integrity with references to the document in which it is found and its authenticity as coming from an alleged author should be conducted with regard to three cardinal facts:—

1. Its bulk and importance.
2. Its relationship to other facts of Christ's life.
3. The opportunities of its authors or editors to gain access to reliable sources of information.

It is self-evident that the larger sections of the New Testament, important actions and episodes of the narrative, the story of a great miracle or parable, an extensive passage of the teaching are much less likely to gain unauthorized entrance into the tradition than minor passages and details. A verse is more easily added than a chapter, a chapter than a book, a detail of description than a connected narrative. In general it may be said that

[1] Page 113.

the scrutiny of the authors or editors of the Gospel narrative was directly proportioned to the importance of the passage under consideration. As a matter of unquestionable fact, modifications which the evangelic tradition has undergone in the process of teaching and recording it consist largely in the addition or subtraction of details. A careful study of the variations of the various strata of the evangelic narrative will show that most of them are small, verbal changes in details. It seems to me utterly impossible that the entire nexus of events contained in the twofold Infancy narrative should have been an accretion. A part of it might have been a mythological addition, but that so vital a subject as the birth and early life of the Redeemer should have been left to the careless and haphazard gathering together of loose, unauthorized mythological fragments is altogether too large an assumption. It is inherently improbable, and fails utterly of any reasonable degree of demonstration.

The second testing principle is the relationship—the harmony or disharmony of the questioned passage with the remainder of the Gospel, and with the nature of the facts dealt with. Dr. Edersheim's argument against John viii, 1–11 proceeds on this basis. No one has successfully maintained any incongruity between the Infancy narratives and the rest of the narrative. We have dealt with this question at length and need not return to the subject.

This leaves us at liberty to turn directly to that aspect of the question which more immediately concerns our present inquiry—the opportunities of the authors to gain reliable information on the subject. This is really from the viewpoint of evidence, the crucial question.

According to Jolley (Syn. Prob., pp. 105, 6), Luke's narrative of the Infancy was taken from the Ebionite Gospel. This narrative he holds to have been the work of a Jewish-Christian writer, who was himself in possession of the primitive Gospel. We have then for all the essentials of Luke's narrative a documentary basis going well back into the Apostolic Age. Now Luke claims (in the prologue to the Gospel i, 1–3) for his narrative in general, and especially for the additions which he makes to the commonly received narrative, the authority of the eyewitnesses. In the case of the Infancy narrative, the eyewitnesses could mean one group of individuals only; *i. e.*, the immediate family of Jesus. The alternative to this origin for the narrative must be very sharply drawn. The stories must be either very close to the fountain-head of authority or very far away. It is altogether improbable, that any one would venture to write a fictitious narrative involving the private history of a prominent family while members of it were still living and known—certainly not without prompt and public rebuke. If the narrative is apocryphal and legendary, it must have come into existence at a very late date, after the family had ceased to exist or be known. We are logically compelled to put the account late enough for the

immediate family of Jesus to have disappeared from among the brethren, and for the early life of Jesus, and even the family traditions to have become hopelessly obscured. The very fact that the narrative is Lucan, is evidence enough that this supposition cannot possibly be true. In addition to the undersigned and most significant internal evidences of direct authority, we have convincing external proof that Luke actually came into contact with the very persons who were in a position to know the facts.

In the year 58 (on the evidence of Acts xxi, 17 ff.) we are assured that Luke went with Paul to Jerusalem and then made the acquaintance of James, the Lord's brother who was the head of that church. I hold it to be absolutely incredible that one who was thus brought into intimate fellowship with a Jewish-Christian group at Jerusalem, of whom a blood-relative of Jesus was a prominent member, would have accepted any important item concerning His life without confirmation from the lips of James, and I am equally certain that such a statement on the part of Luke would never have been tolerated by the Church had he been willing to offer it.

The chain of arguments is complete. On the one hand, the responsibility of Luke for the Infancy section is beyond question; on the other, his acquaintance with the family of the Lord is fairly beyond successful contradiction. Every item of available evidence, therefore, points to approximately first-hand narration.

Dr. Sanday[1] and Prof. Ramsay[2] differ slightly as to nearness of Luke's narration to the original story. Both recognize the presence of first-hand elements, and also literary modification in the story—the only question is as to the number of intermediaries. We have only to imagine that the story told by Mary had been put into an Aramaic narrative with the outline of events, the messages and the songs, to satisfy all the conditions of the problem. How much Luke worked over his materials it is, of course, impossible to say. There are characteristic Lucan expressions, together with undoubted Aramaic reminiscences, in almost the same sentence. It is not necessary to suppose more than one document between Luke's finished narrative, and Mary's artless story.

At this point, let me call attention to another contrast. Among the fragments of oral Gospel outside the cycles with which Prof. Wright classes, for convenience's sake, the Infancy narrative of the first Gospel, occurs one incident, to the unreliability of which he calls attention. In Acts i, 18, 19, Luke gives us an account of the way in which the field which was connected with the tragedy of Judas gained its name. This narrative seems to be in fatal collision with Matthew's account of the same thing. (See Matt. xxvii, 5–8.) Ramsay (St. Paul, p. 368) has "no hesitation in accepting the vivid and detailed description which Matthew gives of this incident."

Conceding the contradiction, we can see at once—(1) that there existed

[1] *H. B. D.*, vol. ii, 644. [2] *Was Christ Born at Beth.?* Chap. iv.

in connection with the catastrophe of Judas, which occurred during the most confused period of the disciples' entire experience and was in itself a thing of horror unsafe to inquire very much about, no considerable opportunity to obtain reliable information; (2) that in spite of the contradiction there is a certain residuum of historic fact. There was undeniably a tragedy connected with Judas, and in some way a parcel of ground had become associated with that tragedy. In striking contrast with this, is the evident carefulness of the Infancy narrative of Luke, and the historic proofs of his closeness to the sources of authority.

Descending now to details, it is necessary to exhibit some of the reasons for the opinions heretofore expressed concerning Luke's narrative.

The expression "Holy Spirit" is used by Luke fifty-three times, twelve times in the Gospel, six times in the Infancy section. (Luke i, 15, 35, 67; ii, 25, 26, 27.)

In the Infancy narrative the word πνεῦμα is used without the article, except in the 26th and 27th verses. In the 15th verse this omission is due to the influence of "an Aramaic origin in which the genitive which follows would justify the omission." The other instances are due, according to Plummer, to the fact that the Spirit is regarded impersonally as the creative power of God.[1] It is interesting to note that the exceptions to this usage are in verses 26 and 27—the reference is manifestly to the Spirit as a Person, and to His influence as a personal influence. In verse 25, the order of the words calls attention to the fact that πνεῦμα refers to the spirit abstractly as a mood or influence. Plummer calls it "prophetic impulse." This usage throughout is strictly Hebraic. We are on the border line of transition from the Old Testament view of the Holy Spirit as "the power of God in action," to the New Testament idea of Him as a Divine Person. The former conception was in the original documents of the Infancy—the latter was Luke's own conception. That Luke had in mind the two usages is evident from the transition in verses 26 and 27. Since we find the same usage in Matthew, Swete (H. B. D., vol. ii, p. 405) is fully justified when he says: "Both contexts are conceived in the Spirit of the Old Testament, and belong to the earliest age of Christianity, when the fullest teaching of the Gospel had not yet been assimilated."

In the 11th verse of chapter ii, we have an expression which, so far as the form of words is concerned, is thoroughly Lucan and probably Pauline. But we find the familiar thought which was the center of the apostolic teaching from the earliest time (the very word σωτήρ being used by Peter in his great sermon, Acts v, 31) in a strange and unfamiliar environment. There is no hint of sacrifice or substitution in the work of the newborn Redeemer. The words translated in harmony with the context show the meaning of the phrase: "There is born to you this day, a Deliverer, who

[1] Plummer, Com. on Luke, *ad. loc.*

is Anointed Lord, in the city of David." The absence of the article seems to indicate that *χριστός* is used as an adjective—at any rate, it is used in the appellative sense, and not as a proper name. When the phrase, "In the city of David," is added it becomes perfectly clear that we are still in the region of pre-Christian Messianic ideas.

If it be true that Luke supplied the words *σωτήρ* and *κύριος* (of which we cannot be at all certain, see Plummer, Com. on Luke, *ad. loc.*)—words which in other parts of the New Testament are fraught with the deepest meaning by reason of the Cross and the open grave, he has refrained from adding to them the least hint of the later richness of meaning. The angels simply tell the shepherds that the long expected Deliverer has come—that the King of the line of David has been born in the city of David, according to the promise.

The expression *χριστὸς κύριος* is unique in the New Testament, and very possibly may have been a pre-Christian Messianic formula (see Plummer, *ibid.*).

Next, attention should be called to the fact emphasized both by Plummer[1] and Briggs[2] that the manifestation of God to Mary is described under the ancient form of theophany. So far, we are in a purely Jewish atmosphere. We are in company with those who had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and to whom the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of long cherished hopes.

We come more definitely into the Christian region in the expression, "Son of God," which is peculiar to Luke's account. What is the history and significance of this phrase? The question is of vital moment in the study of the document.

Stalker says (Christology of Jesus, Armstrongs, 1900, p. 95): "In the first chapter of St. Luke, the angel of the Annunciation calls the child to be born of Mary by this name, not because He is to be the Messiah, but for the reason stated in these words: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' The derivation of His human nature by the special creative act of God is here the reason of the name -a reason akin to that on account of which it is also given by St. Luke to Adam." Bringing these two passages together is most illuminating, but Dr. Stalker does not seem to have enjoyed the light which he himself has evoked, for he goes on to say, "I do not remember any other place in Scripture where this precise point of view recurs."

In the first place, it is to be remembered that the sentence from Luke quoted above was spoken in reply to Mary's question, "How can these things be?" In the 32d verse he says of Mary's Son, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High," etc. In this verse, the son-

[1] Com. on Luke, *ad. loc.* [2] See note above, p. 131.

ship is not connected with the mode of His conception at all—it is connected with the greatness of His character.

In the second place, the passage occupies the consistent viewpoint of a dominant part of the New Testament, so far as the derivation of the Lord's human nature is concerned. Bringing these two passages (Luke i, 35, and iii, 38) together, incidentally demolishes Lobstein's "physical-filiation" theory and also leads out into large New Testament truth. Luke is evidently conscious of a parallel between Adam and Christ, but the point of connection is not the mode of Christ's conception, for Adam was not conceived at all, but in the special creative act of God. Adam was the son of God by immediate creation, so also was Christ in His human nature. But this brings at once to mind the Pauline conception of Christ as the second Adam. It is certain that the miraculous birth as interpreted by Luke is the exact corollary of Paul's doctrine of the heavenly man or the second Adam. It would puzzle any one to interpret the origin of Christ's human nature on the basis of Paul's doctrine by any other process than a miraculous birth.

Where did Paul obtain this conception of the second Adam? It is evident from his use of the parallel that it appealed to him chiefly from the side of anthropology rather than theology.

Adam was the head or representative of fallen humanity—Christ the head of redeemed humanity. It is evident, however, that implicit in Paul's whole conception is the same thought which Luke expresses, that Jesus was the Son of God by a process of bringing into the world analogous to the creation of Adam.

It is altogether probable that both Paul and Luke derived the conception from their Jewish-Christian teachers. In accordance with the purposes and interests of each, the fundamental idea of Christ's divine Sonship through creation according to the similitude of Adam is developed in different directions. Paul uses it to emphasize and illustrate his doctrine of sin and redemption, Luke to adorn and interpret his belief in Christ as the universal Saviour.[1]

As Knowling (testimony of St. Paul to Christ, p. 44)[2] puts it: "If St. Paul had interpreted this title, 'Son of God,' in a way different from that in use among his brother apostles; if in associating the Person who bore it so closely and intimately with God the Father, he had been guilty of placing himself in opposition to the beliefs of the Jerusalem Church; if in other words, the deification of Christ was due to St. Paul, how is it that we do

[1] In the very earliest intimation we have of St. Paul's teaching, he proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God (Acts ix, 20). This account follows his conversion and acquaintance with the brethren at Damascus (cf. Acts vii, 59; Gal. i, 16; ii, 20). We are thus led for an explanation of the phrase, "Son of God," to the earliest stratum of apostolic teaching.

[2] Cf. also Sanday, *H. B. D.*, vol. iv, p. 277, note.

not hear of any such opposition, of any violation of Jewish feeling and belief?" There can be no answer to this question, for Paul and the other leaders of the early church were in complete harmony on the fundamental doctrine of the person of Christ.

We have, therefore, a strong chain of evidence which connects the Infancy narrative of the third Gospel on the one hand with Luke the companion of Paul, and on the other with some such group of Jewish-Christian believers as were at Jerusalem at the time when the apostle and his friend visited the Holy City. The document which Luke translates and embodies in his narrative must have been composed from personal memoirs some time previous to the year A. D. 58. All the evidence tends to show that in it we have genuine reminiscences of the time before the Messianic conception was transformed by the death and resurrection of Christ.

Prof. Chase makes a fair and moderate statement of the case when he says (*Cam. Theo. Essays*, pp. 408, 9): "There are, I believe, very strong critical reasons for accepting the tradition that the Acts and consequently also the third Gospel were the work of St. Luke. The Acts evidence, as we have already seen, that the writer spent some time in Jerusalem and in Palestine, and further that he was known to James, the brother of the Lord. It is not an extravagant conjecture that he derived his knowledge of the Birth and Infancy of our Lord from St. James and other members of the Holy Family. As regards St. Luke's story, therefore, the inference that it is ultimately derived from the Lord's mother is in agreement with what we independently infer from a study of the other Lucan document as to the sources of information open to the evangelist." In view of all the facts, it is not extravagant to say that there are few documents coming down to us from antiquity which are so well attested as the preliminary section of the third Gospel.

Turning now to the corresponding section of the first Gospel, we find the case somewhat different. In the first place, as Prof. Wright says, the document shows unmistakable evidences of having been in the hands of the catechists and used for oral teaching. This being so, the conclusion is inevitable that whatever primitive material the section contains has undergone certain modifications in the course of its transmission. This latter consideration is of primary importance, for it affords a reason for the discrepancies which we find between the two narratives. Coming as the primitive element in the narrative much from practically the same source as Luke's, it would be difficult to understand how such discrepancies as that concerning the previous residence at Nazareth could arise. But if the primitive document or oral narrative had been in the hands of catechists, many of whom had no knowledge of any other story of the Infancy, we could understand that in the process of teaching and transmission, the account would tend to become a closed cycle, complete in itself; and lose all signs of con-

nection with the other story. The search for primitive matter in the narrative would naturally lead us at the outset to the passage. Matt. i, 18–25. I hold it to be self-evident that such an incident could not have been an imaginative creation—the only conceivable way in which such a story could have risen as a late production would have been as an offset to Jewish or heathen calumnies—that is, after the publication of the virgin birth had given rise to calumniation among the opponents of Christianity. As we have no evidence of such calumnies until the second century, the narrative, on this supposition, must have been very late. This hypothesis is incapable of successful defense. The conclusion is, therefore, inevitable that we have a very early narrative coming more or less directly from the family itself.

In the following chapter, the visit of the Magi and connected events are also undoubtedly primitive and more or less direct. As has already been noted, it is a homogeneous, self-consistent, and interdependent narrative. The coming of the Magi gave a dangerous publicity to the child's birth and brought about the flight and the massacre. It is consistent with itself and also with the preceding narrative. The tie which binds these two apparently disconnected narratives together is the prominence ascribed to Joseph. And in this very fact, we have an evidence of the primitive character of the original document. What conceivable motive could there be for a late exploiting of Joseph? What scanty evidence we have, seems to point to his death before the ministry of Jesus began. Why then should any late believer wish to invent incidents in which he is prominent? To be invented at all requires a late date for the passage—at such a date the motive for invention had ceased to exist. Apart from the application of prophecy to the incidents, a much controverted topic which will be alluded to a little later, there are not a few indications of an early date.

1. The impersonal use of the term, "Holy Spirit." The significance of this has already been commented upon.

2. Use of the phrase, "Herod the King." This is a slight but significant indication of date. We find from Josephus (Ant. xviii, 5, 3) that after Herod's death, he came to be called "Great" in distinction from the other members of the Herodian family who succeeded him and were the reverse of great. In the first and third Gospels, he is called "The King." The narratives while written after Herod's death occupy, perhaps unconsciously, but none the less certainly, the contemporary viewpoint. This would have been impossible for a late writer.

3. The conception of salvation in the section (i, 22) is Messianic rather than Christian, and like that of the prophets, social rather than individual. "He shall save His people from their sins." The phrase *τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ* is a distinct echo of the "peculiar people" promise of the Old Testament. The sins are those which would interfere with the establishment of the Messianic age.

4. The expression and idea of ἄγγελος Κυρίου (ii, 13) is purely Hebraic.

These four items of evidence are certainly adequate proof that we have no late document—if not late, it cannot well be mythical.

Weiss (B.) In. N. T., vol. ii, p. 274, note 28 claims that the form of the word Jerusalem found in Matt. ii, 1 belongs to the evangelist, and not to the source.

It is not a vital question, for no one denies that the document has been through the hands of the evangelist. I should like to think that Weiss is correct in this supposition because it is so favorable to the primitive character of Luke's narrative, but I fear that I must forego whatever advantage it involves, for the evidence is against it. The ending (λημ) attributed to the source is used in Matthew but once out of a total of twelve instances. It is used not at all in Mark, and all but three times in Luke. In the Infancy section of the latter it is used six times out of seven. It is evidently an individual peculiarity with no documentary significance.

At this point, a question arises concerning the origin of the specific applications of prophecy of which the first Gospel has eleven, four occurring in the Infancy section. Prof. Wright argues strenuously against the Matthæan origin of these passages, but the arguments to the contrary adduced by Weiss, and Bartlett (H. B. D., vol. iii, p. 297b) seem to me conclusive. This is not the vital question, however, for the historical investigation. The legitimacy of the applications of prophecy is one question, the historicity of the incidents with which the prophetic passages are connected is quite another. It is with the latter that we are now concerned. Taking up these passages which occur outside the Infancy narrative, we have the following:—

(1) Matt. iv, 15–16 connected with Isa. ix, 1;
(2) " xii, 18–21 " " Isa. xlii, 1–4;
(3) " xii, 40 " " Jonah i, 17;
(4) " xiii, 14–15 " " Isa. vi, 9, 10;
(5) " xiii, 35 " " Psa. lxxviii, 2;
(6) " xxi, 5 " " Zech. ix, 9; and Isa. lxii, 11;
(7) " xxvii, 9, 10 " " Zech. xi, 13.

The analysis of these instances leads to the following results:—

1. The prophecy is connected with the transition of Jesus from Nazareth to Capernaum as a place of residence. It is a perfectly natural and certainly historical event—one of the undisputed events of the narrative.

2. The prophecy in this passage is connected with one of the instances in which Jesus is represented as having cautioned the people whom he had healed from indiscriminate publication of the miracle. There is no reason whatever to suspect the historicity of the incident—it finds abundant confirmation elsewhere.

3. The passage from Jonah is applied figuratively to the Resurrection which is assuredly historical, if any cardinal event of the Gospel narrative is.

4. The prophetic passage quoted here is applied to the statement of Jesus in which He explains to them the hidden meaning of the parable which He had spoken to the people. There is no reason to suspect the reality of the statement. It is one of the characteristic utterances of Jesus which no one thinks of disputing.

5. The prophetic passage is quoted here also in connection with the habit of Jesus of speaking in parables. There is no reason to suspect the saying.

6. The prophetic sentences from Zechariah and Isaiah quoted in this passage relate to the triumphal entry—an undisputed incident in the career of Jesus, confirmed both by Mark and Luke.

7. This prophecy is brought into connection with the betrayal, and finds a hint of the sum received for the deed. That Judas actually received the money is not seriously questioned.

Now, in studying these prophecies it becomes evident that the person who is responsible for them is not attempting to fit events to prophecies, but to fit prophecies to events. His inventiveness and imaginativeness are exercised in searching for prophecies to illustrate the events with which he is familiar. By far the larger part of these seven instances are familiar, general, thoroughly-accredited incidents, and not one of them is under suspicion. Now, if the same person is responsible for the prophetic applications in the Infancy section as is most probable—indeed practically certain—the inference is certainly reasonable that the same motive operated in producing all the quotations. Why should we suppose that out of eleven instances four should be pure inventions, *in toto*, out of nothing, and seven simply well-accredited historic instances? The reasonable conclusion is that in the four instances as in the seven the author took accredited incidents and made the applications of prophecy to them.

We have thus reached the conclusion that the foundation document of the Infancy narrative of the first Gospel was a history of Joseph's part in the events which preceded and followed the birth of Jesus. That such a document was in existence and in safe keeping for future preservation seems almost a certainty. The registration of circumstances surrounding the birth of a firstborn son in an Eastern family is not ordinarily left to chance. Certainly, in a house of the lineage of David, at a time when the Messianic hope was particularly vivid, the birth of a son would be an important event. If there were any wonderful incidents connected with it, they would unquestionably be put into a record. If Joseph had any experiences out of the ordinary, he would undoubtedly see to it that a careful narrative of his experiences was preserved. He would guard the honor of his home after his death as he had done in his life. It is my

conviction, deepened by every hour of study which I have been able to put upon the document that in the Infancy section of the first Gospel, aside from the prophetic applications, we have the personal story of Joseph's relationship to Christ—an *apologia pro vita sua*—the enduring memorial of a good man's life. This document is all the more significant and pathetic, if it be true that he was early removed from the scene, and did not live to witness the career of his unique foster Son.

I may also record the conviction to which (though the evidence may seem too slight to warrant the conclusion) I have gradually come in the course of this study—that the two narratives of Matthew and Luke are fragments of one common narrative. To be sure, Dr. Briggs finds in Matthew a part of a poem in the same meter as one in Luke, but I base my conviction more upon a certain underlying unity of thought,[1] viewpoint, feeling, and atmosphere which, in spite of superficial differences, seems to point to a common document. Might there not easily have come into the possession of the Jerusalem church a document containing the personal reminiscences of the Holy Family which might be called, "The Memoirs of Joseph and Mary"?

The publication of the documents presents a slightly different problem. The history contained in these documents must for a long time have been kept secret, and for this reason, the evidence for the history of the documents is scanty.

Prof. Chase maintains that the interpretation of the documents as unhistorical is beset with difficulties, and while he admits that the positive documentary evidence is comparatively slight, asks this significant and unanswerable question: "Can we, if the truth of the history is assumed, conceive of the evidence being essentially different from what it is? We keep our birthdays; we veil all that concerns the first beginning of our physical life in reverent silence. It cannot have been otherwise in the Holy Family. The story, if true, must have rested ultimately on the word

[1] Prof. Bacon's contention (quoted by Dr. Riggs in the Introduction from Biblical World) that the virgin birth is a compromise or amalgamation between the primitive doctrine of Messiahship by descent from David, and the Hellenistic, of Messiahship by Incarnation, etc., seems to miss certain fundamental facts of the problem. 1. The statement concerning the virgin birth is not a derivative of Paul's or John's doctrine: it is one of the facts from which their doctrine was derived, and is just as primitive as the theory of the Davidic descent. It does not go back of the Christian era, but it stands as primary fact in that era. It is not secondary nor derivative and, emphatically, it is not conceived in the Hellenistic spirit nor expressed in the Hellenistic form. 2. The Incarnation is a summary of the Christian facts under one comprehensive designation. It is a growth, the roots of which strike back to the facts of Jesus' life.

of the Lord's mother. It can only have been known to very few, and their lips must long have been sealed."

Holtzmann puts the problem very suggestively. He says (L. J. Eng. Tr.): "All these open manifestations of joy (referring to Luke's narrative) at the birth of the Messiah would have betrayed to the world, prematurely, the secret which Jesus, at the time of Peter's confession, declares had never yet been uttered by human lips, and which even at that comparatively late period He still does not allow even His own disciples to mention to any one (Matt. xvi, 17, 20; Mark viii, 29)." This is a manifest overstatement, but it certainly expresses an important truth, and is worthy of careful examination. There are two questions to which Holtzmann's objections give rise: "How great publicity is involved in Luke's narrative? What bearing has the secrecy which Jesus enjoined upon His disciples upon the subject we are now studying?"

As to the publicity implied in the narrative, it is evident that there is an inclination to exaggerate it. It is said (Luke i, 65, according to our version) that the incidents connected with the birth of John were carried abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa, and, again (ii, 17), that the shepherds made known abroad the saying which had been told them concerning the child. In both cases, the translation unduly emphasizes the element of publicity and wide proclamation. At the most, nothing could have occurred but country-side gossip and perhaps a nine-days' local wonder. Moreover, Luke intimates most significantly that the family did not talk. This means that the spread of gossip concerning the birth must have been checked by the blank unresponsiveness of those who were most closely concerned. The emphasis with which Luke states the attitude of Mary carries with it the implication that he considered the matter of great importance (cf. verses 17 and 18 with 19).

But, even so, as Holtzmann suggests, it was dangerous; and the narrative of the first Gospel comes in to show us how dangerous it was. The talk occasioned by the birth of John, and the interest aroused by the story of the shepherds, died away without coming to the ears of the authorities. It was provincial, local, and temporary, so that Herod's many spies heard nothing of it.

Not so the coming of the Magi. They journeyed at once to Jerusalem, and made public inquiry, with a naïve frankness which shows that they were better acquainted with the religious hopes than with the political situation of Israel. Their inquiry was heard by some of Herod's spies, and at once reported to him. This resulted in a disturbance at the palace in which all official Jerusalem shared; and since the Jewish authorities were consulted, the excitement was doubtless widespread. It resulted in the blind attack upon Jesus, and the murder of the children at Bethlehem. Thenceforward the Messiahship of Jesus was kept a profound secret among

His own people; and one might perhaps safely say, after the death of Joseph with His own mother, until at His ministry it was brought forward under new conditions. Holtzmann's criticism, which would be entirely justified if the facts were just as he states them, serves to bring out the striking truthfulness of the narrative. It is true to the times, the conditions, and the circumstances, under which He was born.

Now, as to the second question. It would seem from the passages referred to by Holtzmann (Matt. xvi, 20; Mark viii, 30; Luke ix, 21) that the Messianic secret was, in a sense, continued throughout our Lord's ministry. Why did He so strongly prohibit the public proclamation of His Messiahship? The reason is to be sought for in the context on each occasion when it occurs.

In the account of the great confession (Matt. xvi, 16–20), the prohibition is placed immediately before the statement that He then began to teach them of His coming death. The connection is most significant. They could not intelligently proclaim His Messiahship because they did not understand it. They had not yet brought into their conception of the Messiah the cardinal fact of His death and Resurrection. In the next chapter, the meaning of the prohibition is clearly brought out. Coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration, the Lord said to His companions, "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." Their illumination as preachers of the Messiah lay still in the future. They were not yet fitted for their task. It was one thing to believe that Jesus was the Messiah—quite another to understand what kind of a Messiah He was to be. The evidence seems clear that Jesus did not proclaim His Messiahship except in answer to faith. He repelled mere idle curiosity. He resolutely sifted His loose following by parables and hard sayings, and kept His clearer teachings for those who exhibited spiritual aptitude and discernment. As time went on and the opposition to Him deepened, He turned more and more to His disciples, to whom He made the most intimate disclosures of truth. There was, therefore, always something esoteric about Christian teaching. The inner and more spiritual truths were made known to seekers for the truth.

The message of the disciples during Jesus' life was the kingdom and the deeds and the words of Jesus, who had come to proclaim and establish the kingdom. Jesus Himself left His Messiahship to be a matter of inference from His person and work rather than a direct proclamation.

We find, as Lumby shows, that this same kind of secrecy was maintained in the sub-apostolic age concerning the statements of the creed. Professor Wright holds that much of Matthew's Gospel was esoteric doctrine; that is, taught to His disciples in an intimate, personal way. We have then some light upon the publication of the Infancy narratives. They occupy the purely Messianic viewpoint. They would, therefore, occupy a position

secondary and auxiliary to the proclamation of the Passion and Resurrection. Their interest is primarily biographical, secondarily doctrinal, and chiefly of interest to those who had come to be believers in Jesus. The story of Christ's birth would naturally not be disclosed until a firm basis for faith in Him had been laid in the proclamation of His passion and resurrection. It would be a part of the arcana of Christianity, until the truth had gained sufficient scope and power to gain for the mystery of the miraculous birth a respectful hearing on the part of those already convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus.

So far as the publication of Mary's story is concerned, it seems to me that Prof. Steele has struck the exact truth when he says[1]: "For, then (the publication of the fact of His virgin birth) there appears before His exaltation no moment when Mary's regard for modesty or for personal safety would have dared whisper it, or when faith could have grasped it."

So far as Luke's narrative is concerned (and the history of Matthew's might be just as clear, had we the facts as well in hand), it seems that we have some indications which point toward the truth. The evidence seems to indicate that Luke's narrative was published directly from the documents of the Jerusalem church. How long it was kept as a secret possession, we have no means of knowing, but probably from some time very near the Ascension to A. D. 58.

Prof. Chase holds that the book of the Acts was written or at least planned before the third Gospel.[2] On the basis of that supposition, he reasons thus: "It seems probable that when St. Luke wrote Acts i, 1, the plan of the Gospel had formed itself in his mind, and that he intended to follow his source (*i. e.* the Markan Gospel), and begin the history with the baptism of John. The fact that there is absolutely no textual evidence against Luke iii (contrast case of [Mark] xvi, 9 ff.) at once negatives the possible suggestion that the two chapters were added in a second edition of the Gospel. We conclude that before the Gospel was published, one of two things had happened: Either the evangelist had received information as to the Lord's birth which he had not possessed before, or he had for some reason become free to use information which he already possessed but might not disclose." If we but knew the date of Mary's death, the final missing clew as to this process might be put in our hands. At any rate we have come near to the actual time and circumstances of publication.

[1] Meth. Review, vol. viii, p. 22.
[2] *Cam. Theol. Essays*, p. 406, note.

NOTE C

A SUMMARY AND ESTIMATE OF DR. RAMSAY'S ARGUMENT IN "WAS CHRIST BORN AT BETHLEHEM?" WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE CENSUS QUESTION

Dr. Ramsay's book begins with a statement as to Luke's claim for his history. While he was not an eyewitness of the remarkable events which he is proceeding to record (page 11), he was one of the second generation to whom the information had been communicated by those "who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." He thus claims the very highest authority for his narrative as a whole.

Luke also claims to have given especial attention to the order and sequence of events, and the genesis and growth of them. His statement implies that, since he had in his possession the materials for a comprehensive and trustworthy narrative, he felt it a duty to supplement accounts already in existence with one more complete. The whole tone of the preface, as well as the words, calls attention to the new material contained in the Gospel, and especially to the Infancy narrative as constituting the most considerable addition which he makes to the narrative.

In view of this claim made by Luke on behalf of his narrative, the question involved in his statement, which dates the birth of Christ in an enrollment, assumes a position of critical importance (pages 21, 22). If this statement be a blunder, the entire story must be relegated to the realm of mythology, and the writer who mistakes fable for fact, and tries to prop up his mistake by another error of the grossest kind, can retain no credit as an historical authority; for, though a historian may make a slip in some detail without losing claim to be trustworthy, he must not found his reasoning upon the error. In the present instance, the error forms the very life-blood of the work.

The design of Luke's history as a whole is to relate the beginnings of Christian history with the administration of the Roman Empire. A blunder so serious as to place the birth of Christ at the time of a census, which took place several years afterwards, impairs the integrity of the entire account in which it is found.

The progress of knowledge in the methods of Roman administration in the provinces has shown that many statements of Luke's, formerly looked

upon as unquestionable blunders, are strictly correct. Luke exhibits "marvelous accuracy and great power of conceiving and setting before the reader a lifelike picture of what actually occurred." This lends great credibility to other statements of his thus far lacking corroboration, for "he that shows the historic faculty in part of his work has it as a permanent possession."

The general character of Luke's work throws doubt upon the supposition that in the matter of the enrollment he has made a blunder (page 52).

Luke's view of the Roman Empire was essentially Greek, and his statements must be estimated as coming from one who speaks of things Roman as they appeared to a Greek.

Luke interprets Paul, therefore, as a Hebrew or Græco-Roman. For a Greek he was unusually accurate in his statements concerning Roman persons and events, but he never altogether frees himself from the Greek viewpoint.

The internal evidence seems to prove that Theophilus was a citizen of Rome (page 65). It would seem, therefore, that a document addressed to a Roman citizen and intended to relate Christianity to the general life of the Empire would be susceptible of exposure on the part of the person to whom it was addressed.

"How, then, does it happen that, while the circumstances of the birth of Christ were closely scrutinized by the opponents of Christianity and subjected to much misrepresentation and many charges of falsification, no one in Roman times seems ever to have discovered the inaccuracies, which many modern inquirers imagine to themselves?" (Pages 70, 71.)

Luke ascribes the utmost importance to the story of Christ's birth. This is shown by the space given to it, by the elaboration of the account, and by the emphasis which he places upon the incidental statements concerning his authority contained in the account (page 74 ff.).

The statement is made that the census forming the hinge upon which Luke's narrative turns is unhistorical and that the statement concerning it involves the transfer of a census and valuation made under Quirinius about A. D. 6–7 to a different period nine or twelve years earlier. There are five considerations which are urged against the correctness of Luke's account.

1. It is declared to be a demonstrated fact that Augustus never ordered any general "enrollment" or census to be made of the whole Roman world.

2. If Augustus had ordered a census to be made of the whole empire, it is maintained that such a census would not have extended to Palestine, which was an independent kingdom and not subject to the orders of Augustus.

3. Even if a census had been held in Palestine, it is asserted that there would have been no necessity for Joseph and Mary to go up from Nazareth to the city of Bethlehem, inasmuch as a Roman census would be made according to the existing political and social facts, and would not require

that persons should be enrolled according to their place of birth or origin.

4. It is maintained that no census was ever held in Judæa until A. D. 6–7, on the ground that the "great census" (Acts v, 37) is described by Josephus as something novel and unheard of, rousing popular indignation and rebellion on that account.

5. It is affirmed that Quirinius never governed Syria during the life of Herod, for Herod died in 4 B. C., and Quirinius was governor of Syria later than 3 B. C. and probably in 2 or 1 B. C. Therefore, a census taken in the time of Quirinius could not be associated with the birth of a child in the days of Herod, King of Judæa.

In reply to each of these arguments Prof. Ramsay has something to say.

In regard to the first there is evidence in corroboration of Luke's statement. This is the chief argument of the book.

In reply to the second argument, it is to be said that Judæa was not an independent kingdom. Moreover, Luke does not state that the census was made according to the Roman plan or by Roman officials.

The third argument against Luke rests upon the same false foundation. Luke's statement implies that Herod carried out the census of Augustus according to Hebrew methods, making it tribal and therefore less repugnant to Jewish feeling.

In reply to argument four, attention is called to the fact that undoubtedly the earliest valuation and census of property made after the Roman fashion in Palestine took place, as Josephus says, in A. D. 7. This aroused indignation and rebellion. The census of Herod was tribal and Hebraic, not anti-national. It had no connection with Roman taxation, and aroused no great national feeling.

These four arguments rest on a false interpretation of Luke's statement. A correct view of what Luke really means to state does much to overthrow all these arguments.

In regard to the governorship of Quirinius (Arg. 5), it is to be remembered that (according to the best authorities) Quirinius was governor of Syria twice. The balance of evidence is in favor of his having held office the first time prior to Herod's death (page 110).

The author maintains that the positions which the book advocates are the "most probable issue of the scanty evidence, and that some of them rest on testimony outside of Luke's writings, which in ordinary historical criticism is reckoned sufficient justification, while the others are in themselves quite natural, and there is practically no evidence against them, so that Luke's authority should be reckoned as sufficient to establish them."

Possible views on the questions involved seem to be three:—

1st. The story of the birth of Christ as given by Luke, is so suspicious and encumbered with so many difficulties that it is as a whole incredible.

2d. The story is true.

3d. The main part of the story is true, but the reference to Quirinius is wrong (page 111).

The third supposition is incredible so that we are practically reduced to the two. If the story is not correct, the statement was introduced in order to give plausibility to a fiction.

Luke's statement implies that Judæa, as a part of the Roman world, was involved in the enrollment. Luke's conception of the affair is this: Augustus ordered a systematic numbering to be made in the empire. This system of numbering went on for a time or more probably permanently, and hence the "first" of the series is here defined as the occasion on which the story turns. Luke does not say that it was actually put in force throughout the empire, but that the principle was laid down by Augustus. From Luke's account, the notion would be drawn that during the first century a system of numbering the population at periodic intervals prevailed.

It is evident that Luke did not confuse the enrollment in connection with which Christ was born, and the later one A. D. 7, for he calls the former "the first census" [1] and the latter "the census, or great census." [2]

Clement thus understood Luke for he speaks of the occasion "when first they ordered enrollments to be made." Clement seems clearly to have known of periodic enrollments in Egypt, and supposed that the same procedure was carried on in Palestine. Clement expressly states that the system began with the one at which the birth of Christ occurred (page 129).

It has been discovered by three independent scholars that the system of periodic enrollments existed in Egypt under the Roman Empire, and that the period was fourteen years.

It has been proved that enrollments were made for the years A. D. 90, 104, 118, 132, and so on till 230.

This would make periodic years 23 B. C., 9 B. C., A. D. 6, 20, 34, 48, 62, etc. In every case the actual enumeration began after the periodic year was ended. When did this system begin? In all probability, Augustus inaugurated the system. He was the emperor who was most systematic in his administration of the provinces (page 139, *seq.*).

The documents bring out two facts:—

1. In some parts, at least, of the empire, the enrollment and numbering of the population according to their households was a distinct and separate process from the census and valuation, which previously was considered to be the only proper Roman kind of census.

2. The enrollment of households took place periodically, in accordance with a cycle arranged according to the years of the reign of Augustus in Imperial, but not in Egyptian reckoning (page 148). Probably this system was introduced later than 18 B. C.

The fact thus resting upon documentary evidence, that Augustus inaugu-

[1] Luke ii, 2. [2] Acts v, 37.

rated a series of periodic enrollments in Egypt, puts a new face upon Luke's statement concerning the enrollment in Palestine. If Luke has blundered, it has been by extending to the entire Roman world a practice which was actually confined to Egypt. Other considerations lend confirmation to the view that he has not blundered, for there is evidence to show that the practice was not confined to Egypt—witness the Apamean stone, (page 151), the statements of Suidas, and Josephus who mentions census figures. Moreover, there is positive evidence that enrollments according to the fourteen-year cycle were made in Syria and elsewhere.

According to Luke, the first enrollment took place a few years B. C. in the unknown year of Jesus' birth.

According to the system which obtained in Egypt, the year 9 B. C. would be the beginning of the second period. This would make the date 8 B. C., as the census was intended to include the children born 9 B. C. Tertullian declares that an enrollment was made by Sentius Saturninus, who was governor of Syria 9 to 7 B. C. Tertullian's statement was not based upon Luke, for it differs from Luke's and cannot be easily reconciled with it. Tertullian adhered to his secular authority. He is an independent witness to a census in the neighborhood of 9–7 B. C. The facts in regard to the census were within reach, so that citizens even of small towns could be identified. Tertullian's variant statement shows existence of strong and independent authority.

In the same year, 8 B. C., in which enrollments seem to have been made in Syria and Egypt, Augustus made a census and found the total number of Roman citizens 4,233,000. A marked year in Roman administration was 8 B. C. The next periodic year was A. D. 6; census taken A. D. 7. Quirinius was governor for the second time in A. D. 6 and he held a great census and valuation of Palestine.

Judæa was at this time incorporated in the empire under a procurator and connected with the province Syria. The great enrollment might be explained as due to necessities of a newly-organized part of the empire, but the coincidence with the new cycle is significant.

The natural inference from known facts is that two operations, one corresponding to the Egyptian periodic enrollment, and one corresponding to the Egyptian annual census and valuation, took place in Palestine in A.D. 7.

The later period was not observed by Augustus, probably on account of increasing feebleness, until Tiberius was associated with him in A. D. 14. In A. D. 20 the census was omitted probably on account of the one held in 14. In 34 carried on as usual, as evidenced by the action of Archelaos in Cilicia Tracheia. This time it created a disturbance in Cilicia. The next period came in 48, and Claudius made the census.

On this series of facts, rests the presumption that the Egyptian fourteen-year cycle has its roots in a principle of wider application. This brings us

very near to Luke's statement that Augustus laid down a general principle for the whole Roman world. On the contrary, Luke provides a key statement, which holds together and explains and makes consistent all the rest of the evidence. When Luke's evidence is held correct, the others fall into line with it and are seen to be the working out of one general principle. The recorded facts show a clear tendency to confirm the cycle.

The most important fact is that we have clear evidence, quite independent of Luke, that the first, second, and fourth periodic enrollments were observed in the province Syria; 1st in Tertullian, 2nd on the Apamean stone, 3rd in Tacitus. The occurrences are enough to show law of recurrence.

The conclusion is inevitable that "there was a system of periodic enrollment in the province Syria, according to a fourteen-year cycle (14 in the modern expression, 15 in Roman form), and the first enrollment took place in the year 8 B. C. (Strictly Syrian year beginning in the spring of year, 8 B. C.)

Justin Martyr in his Apol. (1:34) appeals to registers in support of Luke.

Herod's position in Judæa, was a difficult and delicate one. He was to keep order and Hellenize the nation under his control. These two tasks, well-nigh incompatible, he performed with great skill, and a fair amount of success. He conformed so far as he could to Jewish prejudices. He kept up the pretense of maintaining Jewish feelings. He maintained heathen practices for the heathen. He left the Jews free. Between the years 8 and 7 B. C., Herod fell into disgrace with Augustus. The Judæan king's administration was much embarrassed too, by his loss of favor. If Luke's evidence is to be taken, Herod for one thing was compelled to take the census. At this time probably, is to be dated the incident of forcing people to take oath of allegiance to Augustus, which six thousand Pharisees refused. Herod would naturally try to avoid the humiliation of this new oath and census, and would ask for delay and would ask of Saturninus permission to postpone the numbering until he had heard from Rome.

The message from Rome was unfavorable and Herod was ordered to go ahead with the census. A second embassy was sent and received more favorably, but still Augustus was obdurate and the enrollment had to go on. These negotiations would bring the date of the enrollment down this side of the year ending April 17, 7 B. C.

Another consideration would cause some delay, viz.; Herod's desire to give the enrollment a tribal, Jewish character. This would be in accord with his general policy and would make the task much easier to perform. All who claimed to be Jews should go to their tribal cities; all others would be enrolled in their places of residence. The probability is that a date for the enrollment was fixed. The most probable date would be late summer of 7 or 6 B. C. There is little to choose so far as extra Biblical information

is concerned, but Luke's data make it more probable that the year 6 is correct. With this the general calculation of the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces agrees. If this coincidence, to say the least, has a sound basis, it unites all the indications of the subject, unites Matthew and Luke and brings the birth of Jesus in the year 7–6 B. C.

The last serious difficulty in the Lukan narrative is the mention of Quirinius. Tabular evidence points to a previous governorship of Quirinius under Augustus (pages 227–8).

According to Mommsen, the most probable date for this previous governorship of Quirinius is 3–1 B. C. This date doubly conflicts with Luke.

1. Herod was dead before it.

2. The enrollment could not have been postponed so long.

Luke does not specify the office held by Quirinius at the time of the Lord's birth. The word (*—ἡγεμονεύοντος*, etc.) with its equivalents is used for procurator, and even for imperial authority in a province. Hence the word employed by Luke might be applied to any Roman official holding a leading position of authority in a province. It might denote some special mission. Some authorities have argued that Luke in assigning the date mentions Quirinius who was at the time on a special mission of conspicuous importance in the province. There are but four certain dates in the life of Quirinius.

(1) Consulship, 12 B. C.

(2) Second Governorship of Syria, beginning A. D. 6.

(3) Prosecution of his wife, A. D. 20.

(4) Death and funeral, A. D. 21.

Between (1) and (2) occur certain events.

(a) He held office in Syria and carried on war with the Homonadenses, a mountain tribe between Phrygia, Cilicia, and Lycaonia. This was a conspicuous service for which high honors were paid him at Rome.

(b) He governed Asia after his first administration of Syria. For this we have only the years 5–4 or 3–2 B. C., or A. D. 4–5 or 5–6. The probabilities are that the year 4–3 B. C., is the latest that he could have spent in Syria.

The whole career of Quirinius is difficult and elusive. The general probabilities based upon his marriage and divorce bring the date of his administration in Asia to 5–3 B. C., and perhaps earlier. The difficulty presented by the governorship of Varus, who ruled Syria from 7–4 B. C., can be solved only by supposing that Quirinius was put in charge of the military force of Asia for the subjugation of the Homonadenses, while the civil administration was left to Saturninus and Varus. This temporary division of duties in a province is in accordance with historic analogy (page 238).

The whole argument is this:—

About 8–5 B. C., Augustus made a great effort to pacify the dangerous and troublesome mountaineers of Taurus, in order to prevent the continual plundering, which they practiced on their peaceable neighbors. This required the coöperation of all officials in the region affected. Military road systems were established, and comprehensive operations began among the mountaineers.

The leader of this work was Quirinius as established by Josephus and Strabo. The probability is that in 7 B. C., when Varus came to govern Syria, Augustus, in view of the great task before him, sent a special officer with the usual title, Lieutenant of Augustus (Legatus Augusti), to direct military operations. Thus Quirinius conducted the war pretty certainly in 6 B. C., varying a little either way. The enrollment of Syria was delayed until 6 B. C. This brought it about that Christ was born under the double governorship, military and civil, of Quirinius and Varus.

This explains the contradiction between Luke and Tertullian who are both in a way correct. Luke's expression concerning the Hegemonia of Quirinius is correct and accurate. Thus the history stands assured.

In examining the argument of Prof. Ramsay, one cannot withhold a tribute of admiration for the achievement. The book is a brilliant *tour de force* of scholarship and logical acumen.

But we wish to assure ourselves as to the cogency of the argument as an argument, entirely aside from our admiration for the work. Certain facts are very clear.

1. The argument does not amount to a demonstration. The author would be the first to acknowledge this—indeed, if we remember correctly, he expressly states this fact.

The interpretation of Luke's meaning and purpose, the setting forth of the internal evidences of care and accuracy, are very strong and satisfactory. It appears at once, however, that the chain of external evidence upon which the whole argument rests is at best only probable—in some cases hardly more than possible. The strongest link in the chain is the evidence for a periodic enrollment throughout the Roman world—one periodic year of which was the year 8 B. C.

From this point on, the problem of adjustment becomes very difficult.

Luke's statement involves:—

(1) The birth of Jesus under Herod.

(2) Under Quirinius.

(3) In Bethlehem because of an enrollment ordered by Augustus.

(4) Carried out by Herod.

To begin with, we have to suppose a delay for a year or more in Herod's compliance with this order of Augustus. To me the most unsubstantial part of the whole argument is the reasoning to account for this delay on

Herod's part.[1] [2] Next, taking it for granted that the dates may be adjusted, Quirinius must be brought into action. This can be done only by postulating two governorships for Quirinius (one of which is seriously questioned), and in addition for the first one a joint hegemony with Varus so that the contradictory references may be reconciled. All this must be pronounced problematical. It exhibits a distinct possibility, but little more.

2. Dr. Ramsay has demolished completely the self-confident dogmatism which hitherto has so flippantly discounted Luke, offhand. His argument has done one thing with thoroughness if nothing more. He has gone over the ground with such painstaking care and picked up every shred of evidence with such keenness of vision that he has exhibited with rare vividness the extreme difficulty of arriving at certain conclusions concerning details of provincial government during the era of Augustus. One might as well be dogmatic on the social conditions of the opposite side of the moon.

Prof. Ramsay has certainly made tenable the position taken in the text, that Luke's account shows indubitable evidence of the presence of the historic spirit; that he meant to write history with care and accuracy; that he made the statement of the Gospel, concerning the circumstances under which Jesus was born, on the basis of authority which he had good reason to trust.

One may believe, if he chooses, that the statement involves an error, but the case is by no means clear and we cannot be accused of credulity if we loyally accept his statements as historically trustworthy.[3]

We agree with Bishop Gore when he says: "It seems to me especially in view of the deficiency of historical authorities for the period, that we display an exaggerated skepticism if we deny that so well-informed a writer as St. Luke may have been quite correct in ascribing the movement to Bethlehem of Joseph and Mary to some necessity connected with a 'census' of Judæa which Herod was supplying at the demand of Augustus." (Gore: Dissertations, p. 21; see also note on same page.)

The vexed problem of the census is an exceedingly tempting subject. It

[1] Such a delay in the carrying out of a decree is not, however, without historic parallel. The royal decree for the secularization of the California Missions was passed Sept. 13, 1813, but was not published in California until Jan. 20, 1821. See James: *The Old Missions of California*, p. 88.

[2] Ramsay himself realizes this weakness in his argument, and in the *Expositor*, vol. iv, pp. 321–328 he meets it. His last word is not yet spoken on the subject.

[3] It is interesting to note that reviewers of Prof. Ramsay's book are practically a unit in holding that, while he has not demonstrated his point, he certainly has advanced the whole discussion to a new stage and made the historical accuracy of Luke much more probable (see review by Shailer Mathews in *Biblical World*, vol. xiii, p. 282).

is sufficiently obscure to be fascinating. The literature is vast and learned, and the scholars who have contended on both sides many and great. It seems to me clearly possible to overestimate the importance of the question. If Luke made a mistake in connecting the birth of Jesus with the enrollment, it might affect one's estimate of Luke's general standing as an historian, but it does not touch the particular point of the place of Christ's birth, and the seriousness of the question is materially lessened when we realize that there are degrees in the mistake which is to be attributed to Luke. Unless it is proved that the census statement as a whole is a pure invention, in order to change the place of birth to Bethlehem, the historical trustworthiness of the narrative will not seriously be impaired (Machen, P. R., Oct., 1905, Jan., 1906). The same writer is clearly right when he says: "It is just this that has not been proved. On the contrary, it seems unlikely that the author should have put all this imperial machinery in motion, and thus exposed himself to easy refutation, in order to accomplish what might have been easily accomplished by a simpler expedient and one which would have been less ignominious to the Messianic King." He says also and truly: "If the note about the census be conceived of as the result of a mere blunder, we need not necessarily give up the general trustworthiness of the account. It all depends upon the nature of the blunder."

That this opens up an interesting field of speculation will be seen from the following citations: Schmiedel says, "Quirinius was governor of Syria A. D. 6, ten years after this time. The most plausible explanation suggested is, perhaps, that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria, but there is no direct and scarcely any indirect evidence to justify the belief. There is no proof that Mary's presence was obligatory.[1] That St. Luke invented such an enrollment is impossible, but that he antedated it is highly probable.

"Making or revising a compilation toward the close of the first century, he might consider that the enrollment supplied an answer to the difficult question: 'How came the parents of Jesus to Bethlehem at the time of the birth?'" This carries us a definite stage forward. Luke did not invent the enrollment—he simply misplaced it. If he did not invent the enrollment, in all probability, he did not invent the incident of the Bethlehem birth. He certainly would not invent an incident, which presented him with so difficult a question that he had to invent a second incident to account for the incident he had just invented. Nay more, he would not have lightly accepted an incident which thrust a difficult question upon him. If he could have denied the incident involving so serious a difficulty, he would have done so rather than resort to such a desperate expedient as inventing or perverting an historic event to account for it. It is impossible to put forward a motive which would induce Luke to accept a loosely accredited fable involving a serious difficulty, which he had to meet and satisfy. The more we empha-

[1] Does Luke say that it was? See Ramsay on the argument.

size the "blunder" involved in the reference to the enrollment, the more certain we make it that the incident in Jesus' life which he records must have had good backing. This is more clearly brought out by Holtzmann (L. J. Eng. Tr., p. 87). He holds that there is no escape from the Quirinius difficulty. He says: "Luke's purpose in introducing the census of Quirinius is, of course, perfectly plain. He knew that Jesus' parents belonged to Nazareth, and he is seeking for some reason which might occasion the journey to Bethlehem. But, in point of fact, he could use it for this purpose only because he associated with it an entirely false conception as to the course of Roman procedure on such occasions." Admitting this last statement, we have this fact before us. Luke knew that the family of Jesus came from Nazareth, and that He was known commonly as a Nazarene. Knowing this he must have believed, unless he had definite information to the contrary, that Jesus was born where He lived. With this belief in his mind, he must have had especially authoritative information to make him change his mind and become so strongly convinced of the Bethlehem birth that he even undertook to move the machinery of the Roman Empire to bring about the event. To take so much trouble, he must have been deeply convinced of the occurrence—such a mental condition could not have been brought about by any unauthenticated rumor. It must have been excellent authority. Whether Luke blundered or not in his historical reference, there is every reason to believe that the event occurred as he said that it occurred. The burden of proof lies with those who deny, and the burden is no light one. They must prove the historical blunder first—and then the biographical next. The two are not one. The first does not involve the second.

NOTE D

CHRIST'S BIRTH AND THE MESSIANIC HOPE

The Messianic Hope of the Jews has been treated recently in a novel and interesting way by Prof. Shailer Mathews of the Chicago University. Prof. Mathews states the essential conclusions to which his investigations have led in the following words: "An impartial comparison of the New Testament literature with the contemporary and immediately preceding literature of Judaism shows an essential identity in the general scheme of the Messianic Hope . . . . The New Testament literature modifies this general scheme only as it is compelled so to do by the actual events connected with the life of Jesus.

"Thus it recognizes that the Christ has suffered and died, and that His death is vicarious. Its belief in the Resurrection is no longer a theory, but a generalization of the fact in Jesus' own career. Its understanding of a personal Christ is now supplemented by a knowledge of the historical career of Jesus as a preacher and exponent of divine love as well as sovereignty. The new Christianity also magnifies the Spirit—the actual interpenetration of the divine and human personalities." (Page 317.)

Taking it for granted that the author is correct in his exposition of the relationship between the old and the new in the New Testament faith, the place of the birth of Christ (although the author does not treat it systematically) in the historical process which he unfolds, is very evident. The mode of the Messiah's entrance into the world, and the method by which His organic connection with the race was accomplished would constitute a problem for solution along with the other facts of His life, such as His sufferings, death, and resurrection. In the Gospels, we have the historic facts of His death and resurrection stated without comment, in the one case other than the prophetic words of Jesus pointing to a deep and hidden significance in His coming death; and in the other, the profound relief and joy of the disciples at finding Him alive after His passion. In neither case is the full doctrinal significance of the historic fact worked out in the Gospels. In the Apostolic preaching recorded at the beginning of the Acts, we have the Resurrection historically considered as a vindication of Christ's Messiahship, and a divine confounding of the counsels of wicked men; but even yet the doctrinal implication of the death and resurrection are not fully unfolded. It

is only when we come to the Epistles of Peter and Paul that we find that the death of Christ has become the foundation of a doctrine of the Atonement; and the Resurrection, the corner stone of positive teaching concerning the last things. We are thus enabled to see the gradual process by which the great historic facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus were finally wrought into the structure of faith, modifying the inherited Messianism of the disciples so vitally that it became practically a new religion.[1]

In the first and third Gospels, the mode of Christ's birth is stated as a historical fact and in that simple form of narrative statement it is allowed to stand. The real problem in connection with the whole matter of Christ's birth is not the form of the historic statement, but the lack of doctrinal unfolding in the rest of the New Testament.

It is clearly evident that an authoritative statement concerning the circumstances of the Saviour's birth, would at some time become inevitable. One of the mooted questions of the time was: "How should the Messiah come, and in what form should He be manifested?"

It is also evident that the actual historical mode of the Saviour's appearance would be likely to modify the inherited Messianism of the disciples quite as much, proportionately, as any other of the facts for which they had to make room in their scheme.

It is also to be noticed that one tenacious feature of contemporary Jewish expectation was that the Messiah should be manifested suddenly and unexpectedly, in some striking and spectacular way. In the passage from John (vii, 27) already commented upon, we have the most unmistakable evidence of this contemporary interest in the mode of the Saviour's birth. Certain of the Jews were always troubled by the fact that Jesus belonged to the household of Joseph and Mary, and acknowledged them as parents. It thus becomes certain that sooner or later the writers of the life of Christ would be compelled to make clear and definite answer to the question concerning the manner of His birth. And being compelled to this by the thrust of actual controversy, they would naturally be at great pains to have the facts well in hand. Indeed, it would seem that in view of the universal interest in the cardinal question of the Messiah's advent, greater pains would be taken in this portion of His life than almost any other. Moreover, it would seem to be equally clear that the inherited notions of the disciples would be molded as in other cases by the impact upon their minds of the actual facts of Jesus' life. Inherited conceptions, at least among the Jews, are too strongly held to be set aside at the bidding of loosely accredited myths or fables. There is no reason to suppose that the expectations of the disciples would differ greatly from those of their contemporaries who,

[1] The Epistles of Paul were, of course, in point of composition, earlier than the Synoptic Gospels as we have them; but they represent a maturer phase of doctrine.

looking for a glorious Messiah, looked also for His glorious advent in dignity and power. They were expecting a Messiah who should appear suddenly in a blaze of splendor, and whose origin should be veiled in mystery. At the very least, they would expect the circumstances of His coming to be in harmony with the exalted character of His personality, and the dignity of His divine mission.

In the absence of authoritative information, the unrestrained fancy of the disciples might easily have run along some such line as that of the men who said: "When Messiah cometh, no one knoweth whence He is." It may be said that this tendency would have been restrained by the evident fact that He had belonged to a Galilæan household, and that there had been about Him people who claimed to be His kinsfolk; besides, the Messiah was to be the son of David. All this is true, but it would have been perfectly easy in the absence of authoritative information and in an atmosphere of vagueness and uncertainty, which must be postulated as the basis of any legendary interpretation of the narrative, to state that Jesus did not really belong to the family of Nazareth; that His origin was wholly miraculous, and that both Joseph and Mary were His foster parents. It would have been in harmony with current expectations to say: "The real kinships of the Messiah are in heaven. He is to be manifested, not born." Why was it necessary to imply a birth at all? The conception of a virgin birth is a complicated invention compared with the simple device of a totally miraculous origin. To this reasoning, there is but one satisfactory answer—that there were at hand, when the narratives were written, so many who knew that Jesus was born of Mary and had grown up in her home from childhood that such an invention would have been impossible. This answer is fatal to the negative position in general; for the person or persons who knew so much were close enough to reliable sources of information to know whether the narrative of Jesus' conception and birth, as related in the Gospels, was fact or fiction. The wholesale invention of a completely miraculous entrance into the world, without the embarrassing circumstances of birth and infancy, would have been more natural to Jewish Messianists than the miraculous birth from Mary; and the statement of this belief with the skill and grace which mark the Infancy narratives of the Gospel would, with many people, have lent tremendous force to the argument for the Messiahship of Jesus drawn from His lofty and mysterious origin. The claim of Davidic descent, which itself involved a controversial question of no little difficulty,[1] might have rested, then as now, upon the foster fatherhood of Joseph, or upon a spiritual interpretation of the promise.

In contradistinction to all this, the narrative as it now exists in its totality —virgin birth and all, in spirit, atmosphere, and details is the very last thing that an imaginative Jewish Messianist would have invented. The story in

[1] See Matt. xxii, 41–46.

both sections implies such weakness, poverty, and obscurity on the part of the family that the further fact stated that the child had been miraculously conceived, which in the form given to it had its own peculiar element of offense, could afford very little relief.

We are thus logically forced, in the absence of a paramount motive for their invention, to the position that in the statements of the first and third Gospels we have, as in the other statements concerning the teaching, death, and resurrection of Christ, the inherited Messianic conceptions of the disciples modified by contact with the actual facts in the life of the historic Jesus.

But, this being so, why did the fact receive no doctrinal unfolding such as was accorded to the death and resurrection of Jesus? In the light of the actual experience of the disciples, this problem solves itself. At the beginning of their ministry, after the Resurrection had taken place, the Resurrection itself was the supreme fact of their entire lives. Their first preaching was "Jesus and the Resurrection"—the supreme Personality and the incident in His career, which had done most to make Him as such known to them. Then, step by step, they were led back from the Resurrection to the death that preceded it; from the death to the life of which it was the issue. Chronologically first—the birth of Jesus, logically, in the unfolding of their thought, came last. The origin of the Messiah was one problem among others, and not the most immediately pressing. It was only when the life, as a life, was being written that the necessity of stating the facts as to the origin of Jesus became urgent.

It is also true that the doctrinal implications of the miraculous birth are not so evident nor so far reaching as those of His death and resurrection. It was the peculiar controversial situation in the second century which gave such doctrinal importance to the question of Jesus' origin.

Paul's peculiar experience led him to place such emphasis upon the resurrection of Christ and upon His death as connected therewith, as well-nigh to eclipse all other facts in the life of Jesus. Besides, his career as a theologian was in all probability cut short by the catastrophe of His martyrdom.

In the case of John, the center of controversy had shifted. The comprehensive and vital question of the Incarnation was at stake; and in the general battle for the reality of the Lord's life in the flesh, which involved the historic faith as a whole, all minor questions of faith under the general contention were lost sight of. The question of the miraculous birth does not definitely arise.

We are thus enabled to see why the historic fact stated in the first and third Gospels was not doctrinally developed in the later New Testament. This was not due to the disbelief of the disciples in it. The silence of the writers of the other New Testament books is evidence enough of this.

None of the men of the New Testament ever hesitated to antagonize beliefs which they did not share. Had the question of the Lord's birth become a controversial one in the time of John or Paul, an authoritative statement, other than those of Matthew and Luke which carried the assent of the teachers of the church, would have been issued by some one of them. Had there been any authorized teaching opposed to Matthew and Luke it would inevitably have been appealed to in subsequent controversy. Nor was it because they did not know it. The relationship between Paul and Luke makes it practically impossible to believe that he was not aware of a cardinal fact in the life of Jesus which Luke took so seriously. The argument from silence is useless when, as in the present instance, a good reason for the omission of statements can be adduced.

The entire logical outcome of Prof. Mathews' studies, so far as they bear on our theme, is to reinforce our faith that the Infancy narratives are an integral and congruous part of the New Testament history.

NOTE E

THE APOSTLES' CREED

The controversy concerning the Apostles' Creed, which is really responsible for recent interest in the Infancy narratives, is full of interest for the student of early Christian history and involves many questions of vital import.

Prof. Harnack's work, "The Apostles' Creed," 1892 (Eng. Tr.) was met and in many important points answered by Prof. Swete of Cambridge (the Apostles' Creed). The results of the controversy and of other studies of the subject are seen in an interesting way in a thoughtful volume by Prof. McGiffert of Union Theological Seminary on the "Apostles' Creed, Its Origin, Its Purpose, and Its Historical Interpretation."[1]

Certain aspects of Prof. McGiffert's discussion have, of course, a bearing upon the question of Jesus' birth.

According to the author, the Old Roman Symbol of which our creed is a modified version, took its rise in the last quarter of the second century, and was framed to meet certain specific difficulties and errors which were then current. The assertion which it contains, that Jesus Christ was born of a woman, was crucified, dead, and buried, and rose again, and that it was the crucified One who ascended into heaven, repudiates the entire docetic conception which made a phantom of Christ's human life.

The origin of the symbol in this controversy accounts for the emphasis which it places upon the virgin birth, and its corresponding neglect of the Baptism. The docetic teachers laid great emphasis upon the baptism of Jesus, not only as the formal inauguration of His ministry, but also as the definite moment when the eternal Christ came down upon the man Jesus in the temporary union which they imagined to have subsisted during His ministry. The orthodox teachers met this attack by minimizing the Baptism, which consequently appears in no early symbol, and giving corresponding emphasis to the virgin birth.

So far as the framer of the symbol is concerned, the dominant interest in the statement concerning the birth of Jesus lay in its reality rather than in its miraculousness.

This statement serves to bring out clearly the fact elsewhere insisted upon,

[1] Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902.

that the first attacks upon the Infancy documents were due quite as much to a bias against their emphasis upon the human element in the origin of Christ as to their insistence and emphasis upon the divine.

Prof. McGiffert's conclusions as to the date of the belief in the virgin birth are interesting. "The belief in the virgin birth, though certainly not common in the earliest days, had become widespread before the end of the first century, as is shown by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and the Epistles of Ignatius, and was a part of the general faith of the church before the Old Roman Symbol was framed."

What the author means by the "earliest times" will appear from the following statement: "It contains the virgin birth, which was believed at a comparatively early day, to be sure, but certainly did not constitute a part of the original preaching of the disciples."

That the virgin birth did not form a part of the early preaching of the disciples is probably correct, but it ought clearly to be recognized that the evidence is by no means conclusive, and that the bearing of the fact upon the general argument is by no means what is often claimed for it.

The evidence supplied by the Gospel of Mark and the discourses in the first part of the Acts is too scanty to base anything but the most general conclusions upon. We are still a long way from certainty on the details of the disciples' preaching.

Moreover, the preaching of the disciples is not decisive testimony as to their beliefs. There was much in their early faith that was only gradually unfolded in their teaching. The belief in the virgin birth emerges into the sub-apostolic age with the marks of authority strongly upon it.[1] So far as we can judge, only a few heretics contested it, and they upon doctrinal and not historical grounds.[2]

Prof. McGiffert says also: "The early stages of the belief we cannot trace. It can hardly have originated with Matthew or Luke, upon the basis of whose statements it became a part of the faith of the church—for it does not dominate nor does it even color their story of Christ's life. In fact it stands entirely isolated in both Gospels."

With some modification, this statement stands, and the bearing of the fact upon the general argument should not be overlooked. It clearly demonstrates that at the time of the formation of the documents, and in the minds of the persons responsible for them, there was no dogmatic bias which could account for the invention of the story. That the evangelists made no doctrinal use of the fact shows that their interest in it was predominantly historic. It seems perfectly clear that the evangelists did not altogether recognize the bearing of the fact, which they had stated concerning Christ's birth, upon Christian doctrine, and did not know exactly what to do with it.

[1] See Gore, Dissert., pp. 41–54.

[2] Nash: Hist. Criticism of N. T., p. 30.

In fact, it required the controversies of a later age to bring out the significance of the historic fact of Christ's supernatural birth.

In the second century, the Infancy narrative formed one of the chief bulwarks against heresies which might easily have overwhelmed the church. The inestimable value of the Infancy narratives in these later controversies may be seen in a very simple and graphic way.

Prof. McGiffert calls attention to the evident fact that while the preposition ἐκ was used in the Old Roman Symbol and by Ignatius, διά was used by Justin Martyr and ἐκ again by Irenaeus and Tertullian. Either preposition might be used to represent the fact stated in the Gospels that Jesus was begotten by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The change, however, from the one to the other, shows clearly the progress of the controversy. The statements of the Roman Symbol were carefully made to combat the teachings of the docetists who denied the reality of the Lord's earthly and physical life. Hence they used ἐκ to emphasize the reality of Jesus' physical derivation from Mary. Justin Martyr, however, was interested in emphasizing the Deity and the preëxistence of Christ. He therefore used the preposition διά to indicate the character of Mary's mediative agency in bringing into the world the divine and preëxistent Christ.

In Tertullian's time, the teaching of Marcion, who also phantomized the Lord's human life, had become a menace to the faith. He, therefore, refuses to use διά and returns to ἐκ. The broad and simple statements of the Gospels were so admirably adapted to the defense of the faith against attacks either upon the deity or the humanity of the Lord, that it is difficult to see how the church could have met those subtle attacks from both sides without them.

In one point, I am compelled to differ seriously from the author's view. In supporting the statement, which is certainly demonstrable on other grounds, that the Infancy narrative and the Logos doctrine had a different origin, he says: "For what we have in Matthew and Luke is not the incarnation of a preëxistent being, but the origin of a new being. It is not that the Holy Spirit (or the Logos) passes through the womb of Mary and thus becomes man, but that the Holy Spirit unites with Mary in producing a new person, Jesus Christ." This statement of an alleged contradiction between the belief in the miraculous birth of the Infancy narratives and the belief in the Incarnation of the preëxistent Logos of John involves a fundamental misunderstanding of both doctrines.

Incidentally, it should be said that the confusion or identification of the Logos and the Holy Spirit is an ancient heresy, and is in line neither with the Infancy documents (whose use of the Holy Spirit is impersonal), nor with John who clearly distinguishes between Christ (Logos Incarnate) and the Holy Spirit who came upon Him with power at the Baptism.

Furthermore, the doctrine of the Incarnation of the preëxistent Christ, as

taught by John and accepted by Paul, does not mean that the Logos simply passed through the womb of Mary without undergoing radical and permanent change by that experience. The phrase of John, "Becoming flesh," means far more than a mere passing through in order to become man. Also, and with special emphasis, the doctrine of the miraculous birth does not mean that the Holy Spirit united with Mary in producing a new person. Nor did the authors of the Infancy sections mean to affirm any such thing. Combine Matthew's use of the Immanuel passage and his interpretation of the realization of ancient theocratic hopes in the newborn king (especially his quotation from Micah in which the Ruler is spoken of, whose goings forth have been of old, from eternity), with the words put by Luke into the mouths of the angels that the Child was Christ the Lord, who should be called the Son of the Highest; and we have a conception of the dignity and greatness of the Babe, the implication of which carries us well on toward the idea of the preëxistent Lord of John and Paul. The Christology of the Infancy sections is Jewish and undeveloped, but it involves far more than the origination of a new person by whatever agency.

One distinguished scholar thinks that this is just the vital point of difference between the theory of natural generation and the historic theory of supernatural generation; *viz.*, that the former involves the origination of a new person in distinction to the creation of a new nature. He says: "Do not we inevitably associate with the ordinary process of generation the production of a new personality? Must not the denial of the virgin birth involve the position that Jesus was simply a new human person in whatever specially intimate relations with God?" [1]

However this may be, the Infancy documents do not teach the creation of a new person.

The special implication of these documents is that the human nature of Jesus was a special, divine creation mediated through the maternal agency of Mary. It is certainly true that Matthew and Luke held to a belief in a real birth and beginning of life to the historical Being whom they knew as Jesus the Christ. They must have done so, for whatever theory one holds as to the person of Christ, it is historically true that the person known as Jesus Christ began to be in embryo at His conception and actually at His birth.

The Gospel narratives affirm that this beginning was due to a special creative act. Matthew and Luke imply that by the agency of God through the virgin Mary, a new beginning was made in Jesus Who was born at Bethlehem.

But so also and no less do John and Paul imply a new beginning in Jesus. For, when John says that the preëxistent Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and when Paul says that the exalted Lord was made of a woman,

[1] Gore, Dissert., pp. 64, 5.

both imply a change on the part of the one becoming and being made, a birth, a beginning in humanity. So far, they are in harmony with the authors of the Infancy sections; but they go one step farther and affirm that this birth, this new beginning in time, was a part of the experience of one who had had an exalted career in eternity.

But that the coming into the world of the preëxistent one did not involve mysterious and radical change in condition, state, and relationship, the assumption of a nature not hitherto possessed, and of limitations not hitherto undergone, totally ignores the Scriptural teaching on the humiliation of Christ, and logically involves a denial of reality of the Incarnation altogether. A complete doctrine of the Incarnation is that at the moment of conception a divinely created human nature began to be and was united to the eternal Christ by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The advent of Jesus Christ means, therefore, the manifestation of a specially created humanity in vital union with the Christ, who had consented to yield Himself to the same limitations even to the extent of being born in obedience to the same creative act.[1]

It was in this sense that we may broadly affirm that Christ was born at Bethlehem, meaning thereby not as some have thought, that Jesus was thus born Who afterwards became the Christ. The very Christ was actually born of Mary. This is the essence of the Christmas message.

Historically, however, we are probably not to suppose that the whole of this majestic truth was revealed to the disciples at once. In all probability, they rose gradually to the lofty faith that Jesus was not only a divinely created man, but also the Incarnation of the eternal Son of the Father.

Viewed thus, there is no contradiction nor even inconsistency in these two modes of Christological interpretation. They lay hold of two aspects of one and the same historic act, and are two parts of one majestic conception.

The true implication of the twofold truth is that Christ's manhood was peculiarly divine in that it was a special creation of God, and that His deity had become human in that He was, even through the process of conception and birth, the Christ, the Son of God.

[1] See Stevens: Johannine Theol., p. 95, also Godet, Comm. on John, *ad. loc.*

NOTE F

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